

WORLD 5
 DUTCH GOVT COLLAPSES
 OVER MIGRATION

MONEY 6
 PAYMENTS WILL BE WITHHELD
 FOR ILLEGAL DUMPING: NHAI

SPORT 7
 TEENAGED GUKESH
 DEFEATS IDOL ANAND



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NEW DELHI, SUNDAY JULY 9, 2023; PAGES 12-14



CAPSULE

SACHIN PILOT BURIES HATCHET WITH GEHLOT
 New Delhi: Congress leader Sachin Pilot made it clear on Saturday that he has buried the hatchet with Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on the advice of party president Mallikarjun Kharge, saying collective leadership was the "only way" forward going into the Assembly polls. **P4**

MONSOON'S 1ST HEAVY SPELL IN DELHI-NCR
 New Delhi: Delhi-NCR witnessed the first spell of heavy monsoon rain on Saturday. However, it created mayhem in Delhi and Gurugram with massive waterlogging. **P3**

DRDO scientist seduced by Pak's Zara, passed info

PNS ■ PUNE

A chargesheet filed by the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) of the Maharashtra police reveals that Pradeep Kurulkar, a scientist with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), fell victim to the charms of a Pakistani intelligence operative known by the alias "Zara Dasgupta".

The chargesheet alleges that Kurulkar engaged in conversations with "Zara" about classified Indian missile systems and other sensitive defence projects.

Continued on Page 2

15 killed in Bengal election violence

7 TMC workers, 2 each from BJP, Cong, Left dead

SAUGAR SEN GUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress-ruled West Bengal witnessed a distressing repetition of history as the panchayat elections on Saturday resulted in uncontrolled violence, claiming the lives of at least 15 people and raising the total number of political deaths in the past 31 days to 33.

Numerous people, including voters, political workers, and policemen, suffered injuries in clashes that took place across the State, from Cooch Behar in north Bengal to Murshidabad in the central region and Kulpi in South 24 Parganas, according to sources in the police administration.

Among the deceased, seven were TMC workers, while two each belonged to the BJP, the Congress, and the Left, sources revealed. Out of the 15 deaths, Murshidabad district accounted for 5, followed by Cooch Behar (3), Birbhum, Malda, Nadia, and North Dinajpur districts.

The polling took place in



Workers of rival political groups in a clash during panchayat elections, at Barasat in North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal on Saturday **PTI**

61,636 booths for 3,317 gram panchayats, 341 panchayat samitis, and 20 zila parishads.

Complaints of widespread rigging and blatant violation of the Calcutta High Court's order regarding the deployment of Central forces poured in from all corners of the State, while lives were lost to gunfire and bomb attacks one after another.

Condemning the widespread violence in the panchayat elections, Union Minister Anurag Thakur accused the administration in Bengal was acting at the behest of the TMC and sought to know why "killings" started as soon as the poll begin and democracy was completely

undermined. He alleged that the Congress and Left were "hand-in-glove" with the TMC and wondered "why the Congress and its leader Rahul Gandhi are silent".

He said "bullet has overtaken ballot" in Bengal and the message of the ballot has been undermined.

BJP spokesperson and Rajya Sabha member Sudhanshu Trivedi also blamed the TMC for destroying State of Bengal by its politics.

He said the State used to be a center of art, culture, and science. Now, it is known for "crimes, anti-national activities, and dangerous appeasement".

Continued on Page 2

Modi says AAP, BRS thrive on unholy nexus

PNS ■ WARANGAL (TELANGANA)

In a scathing attack on the ruling BRS in Telangana and the AAP Government in Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said allegations of corruption deals between political parties and State Governments have arisen for the first time.

While it is common for State Governments to form pacts on matters of welfare and development, such as water sharing, this is the first instance where such allegations have been leveled against two parties, the Prime Minister noted, referring to the Delhi excise policy case.

As the case unfolds, AAP leader and former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish



Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits the Bhadrakali Temple in Warangal in Telangana on Saturday **PTI**

Sisodia has been arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), while K Kavitha, the daughter of BRS leader and Telangana CM K Chandrasekhar Rao, appeared before the ED for questioning regarding the case.

Continued on Page 2

Railways to cut AC chair, EC classes fares by 25%; to drop flexi fare scheme

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Railways has decided to cut fares of AC chair cars and executive classes of all trains, including Vande Bharat, and those with Anubhuti and Vistadome coaches, by up to 25 per cent, depending on occupancy.

In a major decision, the railway also decided to withdraw the flexi fare scheme applicable in Rajdhani and Shatabdi trains. This will now make cheaper travel in these elite trains.

The discounts will be implemented with immediate effect and will be applicable for a period of one year. The fares will also depend on those of competitive modes of transport. "This scheme shall be applicable in AC chair car and executive classes of all trains



Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw inspects Vande Bharat Express trains production at ICF in Chennai on Saturday **PTI**

having AC seating accommodation, including Anubhuti and Vistadome coaches," the Railway Board order stated.

The discount shall be up to a maximum 25 per cent on the basic fare. Other charges like reservation charges, super fast surcharge, GST, etc, as applicable, shall be levied separately.

Continued on Page 2

India's heritage sites lag in forex earnings

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

A report by the Government's think tank Niti Aayog has highlighted that despite being home to over 40 World Heritage Sites, India's foreign exchange earnings in 2019 were meager, amounting to USD 30 billion. This figure pales in comparison to countries like the

UK and USA, which have 34 and 24 such sites, respectively.

The report emphasises the need for an aggressive marketing strategy to showcase India as a popular tourist destination and capitalise on the benefits of having a rich collection of heritage sites recognised by UNESCO.

India boasts a total of 32 cultural and seven natural World Heritage Sites.

The recently released report titled "Restoring Growth of Tourism in the Wake of the Pandemic" comes at a significant time as India hosts the G20 Summit. The report high-

lights the severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry, which was previously experiencing a growth rate of 3.5 per cent compared to the global economic growth rate of 2.5 per cent in 2019. However, during the pandemic, the industry has experienced a significant downturn.

Continued on Page 2

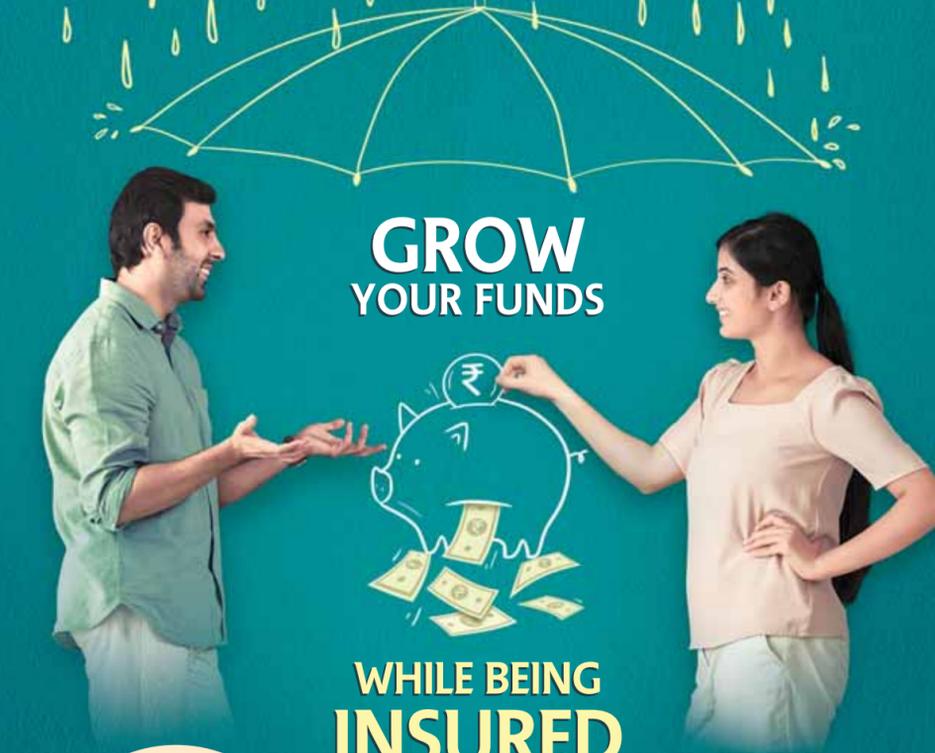



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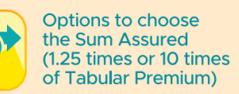
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Order enquiry against 'corrupt' NCP leaders, Sharad dares PM

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Invoking late Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's famous line "Na tired hu, na retired hu" (I am neither tired nor retired) to dismiss his nephew Ajit Pawar's age jibe against him, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar on Saturday dared Prime Minister Narendra Modi to order an enquiry against the "corrupt" NCP leaders and said he would support in the Centre in prosecuting the tainted leaders.



you in your actions against corrupt leaders."

A wily politician that he is, Sr Pawar sought to turn the table on Modi by seeking an enquiry against his own nephew Ajit Pawar and other NCP leaders, including Bhujbal, whose names figured initially in the corruption scams linked to the money laundering cases being investigated by the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

Though the ED dropped the names of Ajit Pawar and his wife Sunetra in the Maharashtra Cooperative Bank scam at the last moment, the ED has charge-sheeted a company linked to the NCP's breakaway group leader in the bank scam. Ajit Pawar's name had earlier figured in the multi-thousand crore irrigation scam. In the process, he

has raised a question as to how Modi allowed induction of the NCP's tainted leaders Ajit Pawar, Chhagan Bhujbal, and Hasan Mushrif, whose names figure in the money laundering cases.

Talking to media persons at Nashik earlier in the day, Sr Pawar had made light of age jibe made against him Ajit Pawar, Sr Pawar said. Ajit Pawar's age jibe against him, Sr Pawar used late Vajpayee's famous line and said: "Na tired hu, na retired hu" (I am neither tired nor retired). I am hale, hearty and capable enough to work hard to rebuild the NCP in the wake of the Ajit Pawar-engineered rebellion within my party."

Taking the battle to the enemy camp of firebrand rebel NCP leader Chhagan Bhujbal

who has been the veteran Maratha leader's staunch supporter since the formation of the NCP in 1999, Sr Pawar indirectly referred to Bhujbal and said: "I erred in trusting some people, but won't repeat the mistake. I have come here to apologise for the same."

Bhujbal, whom Sr Pawar had made the first deputy chief minister in the Congress-NCP government between October 1999 and December 2003, was all along considered a blue eyed boy of the NCP chief. He currently represents Yeola constituency in the Maharashtra Assembly.

At Yeola rally, it was not just Sr Pawar but all the NCP leaders, including his daughter—MP Supriya Sule, former minister Dr. Jitendra Awhad, actor-turned MP Dr. Amol Kolhe and his grand-nephew and MLA Rohit Pawar were cheered enthusiastically by the crowds.

All of them received a rousing reception near the rally venue, where the vehicles of Pawar and Sule, were blocked by their supporters who mobbed the NCP chief and his daughter and offered them flowers and garlands, tried to shake hands or touch them. Several of them insisted on taking selfies with them.

Modi's Purvanchal visit marks beginning of BJP's election preparations in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day visit to Purvanchal, which encompasses 27 Lok Sabha seats, marked the beginning of the Bharatiya Janata Party's extensive election preparations in Uttar Pradesh.

During his visit, Prime Minister Modi announced development projects worth billions of rupees for Gorakhpur and Kashi, cementing the party's focus on the region.

To bolster their electoral prospects, senior BJP leaders, including Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, various Union ministers, and BJP national president JP Nadda, will embark on election visits in different regions of the state starting from August, a senior BJP leader disclosed.

Purvanchal has been meticulously divided into 27 Lok Sabha constituencies, with Varanasi serving as the centre of the Kashi region and Gorakhpur as the centre of the Gorakhpur region. Currently, the BJP holds 12 out of the 14 Lok Sabha seats in the Kashi region and 10 out of the 13 Lok Sabha seats in the Gorakhpur region.

In the previous elections, the Bahujan Samaj Party man-



aged to secure victories in Ambedkar Nagar, Ghazipur, Ghosi, Jaunpur, and Lalganj constituencies. However, the BJP secured the Azamgarh seat, a traditional stronghold of the Samajwadi Party, in the by-elections. Speculation is rife about the possibility of SP general secretary Shivalp Yadav contesting this seat in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

With the ambitious target of winning all 80 seats in UP in 2024, the BJP faces the challenge of breaking through the SP-BSP stronghold while retaining its existing 22 seats. According to political analysts, Narendra Modi is fully focused on the upcoming elections, recognising the critical importance of securing a substantial victory in UP to secure his third term as the prime minister. His visit to Gorakhpur and Varanasi, key districts in Uttar Pradesh, aims

to convey the message that the state holds paramount importance to him, covering a range of issues from nationalism to development.

As an MP representing Varanasi, Modi has prioritised the development of Purvanchal even as Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who represents Gorakhpur, is a prominent face of the BJP's Hindutva ideology. Over the past six years, both the Modi and Yogi governments have initiated significant projects, including the Purvanchal Expressway, Gorakhpur Link Expressway, and Ballia Link Expressway.

The construction of the grand Ram Temple in Ayodhya is progressing rapidly while the completion of the Kashi Vishwanath Dham Corridor is a testament to the government's commitment to development of the region. Additionally, the region

now boasts of an international airport in Kushinagar, and the Yogi government has taken decisive actions to combat criminal elements, leading to improved law and order in Purvanchal. Special incentives have also been implemented to promote investment and industrial development in the region.

Purvanchal is known for its diverse representation of various castes, including Kurmi, Maurya, Rajbhar, Nishad, Yadav, and others. In the previous Lok Sabha elections, most of these castes, with the exception of Yadav and Rajbhar, leaned towards the BJP. The region also comprises a significant number of Dalit voters from Kori, Pasi, Sonkar, Jatav, and Kol castes.

To further expand its support base, the BJP aims to reach out to the Pasmanda Muslim community and make inroads into the Muslim vote bank of the SP-BSP alliance.

Prime Minister Modi's visit focuses on addressing the concerns and aspirations of the backward, Pasmanda, and Dalit communities. Experts believe that gaining support from these communities, in addition to the traditional vote bank of Brahmins, Thakurs, Kayasthas, and Rajbhars, will contribute to the BJP's mission of winning all 80 seats in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections in UP.

DRDO scientist seduced by...

From Page 1

Kurulkar, who held the position of director at one of the DRDO labs in Pune, was arrested on May 3 on charges of espionage under the Official Secrets Act.

He is currently in judicial custody. According to the chargesheet, Kurulkar and 'Zara Dasgupta' communicated through WhatsApp, as well as voice and video calls. 'Zara' claimed to be a UK-based software engineer and managed to befriend Kurulkar by sending explicit messages and videos. During the investigation, it was discovered that her IP address originated from Pakistan, as stated in the chargesheet by the ATS.

The Pakistani operative attempted to extract classified and sensitive information on various defence systems, including the Brahmos Launcher, Drone, UCV, Agni Missile Launcher, and Military Bridging System, among others.

The chargesheet states, "Kurulkar, who was enticed by 'Zara', stored classified and sensitive information from DRDO on his personal phone and subsequently shared it with her." It further reveals that their conversations revolved around surface-to-air missiles (SAM), drones, Brahmos and Agni Missile Launchers, and UCVs.

The ATS investigation indicates that Kurulkar and 'Zara' remained in contact from June 2022 to December 2022. Shortly before the DRDO initiated an internal probe into Kurulkar's suspicious activities, he blocked 'Zara's' number in February 2023. However, he received a WhatsApp message from another unknown Indian number, questioning why he had blocked them. The chargesheet reveals that Kurulkar also shared his personal and official schedules and locations with 'Zara' despite knowing that he was prohibited from doing so.

India's heritage sites...

From Page 1

The tourism sector's contribution to global GDP and employment has declined by 49 per cent and 19 per cent respectively, despite government efforts to boost the industry. In 2019, tourism accounted for 8.8 per cent of total employment, 5.8 per cent of total exports, and 6.9 per cent of GDP, but these figures have significantly dropped to 4.7 per cent, 7.3 per cent, and 2.5 per cent respectively.

A report highlights India's low share of the international tourism market at 1.2 per cent in 2019, compared to countries like Spain, the USA, China, the UK, and Thailand with larger shares ranging from 2.7 per cent to 5.7 per cent. The report attributes this disparity to poor infrastructure, connectivity, safety and security, lack of skilled manpower, inadequate promotion and marketing, and poor hygiene and sanitation.

To revive the sector, the report suggests focusing on cleanliness and sanitation, using a Safe Travel Stamp to rebuild tourist confidence. The stamp, launched by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), identifies governments and companies that have adopted global health and hygiene protocols. Many countries are currently using the Safe Travel Stamp to attract tourists.

The report also emphasises

the importance of promoting Wellness Tourism and integrating it into the mainstream. It recommends providing skills and infrastructure for the alternative medicinal sector to tap into its potential and maximise its value within the tourism industry.

Additionally, the report highlights the disrepair of important monuments in India due to the lack of basic infrastructure and illegal construction activities. Efficient management of tourist sites, preserving cultural treasures, and enhancing the overall tourist experience are crucial to attract more visitors to India's historical landmarks.

The report criticises the poor functioning of the Swadesh Darshan Scheme for developing theme-based tourist circuits, calling for a review of fund disbursement processes and monitoring of tourist circuit projects. India should explore adventure tourism, cruise tourism, and medical value tourism as potential sources of revenue. The report suggests waiving customs duty on adventure equipment imports, rescheduling loan dues, waiving statutory dues, and increasing insurance premiums.

Furthermore, the report proposes the creation of a 500 crore fund with annual investments to sustain the industry during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

SGPC meet opposes UCC

PTI ■ AMRITSAR

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) on Saturday opposed a Uniform Civil Code (UCC), alleging that it will hurt the distinct identity of minority communities in the country.

At an executive committee meeting of the apex gurdwara body presided by SGPC President Harjinder Singh Dhali here, the members asserted that there is no need for the UCC in the country as the Constitution recognises the "principle of unity in diversity". There is an apprehension among the minorities in the country regarding the Uniform Civil Code that it will hurt their unique identity and religious tenets, Dhali told reporters after the meeting.

The SGPC has constituted a sub-committee of Sikh intellectuals, historians, scholars, and lawyers on UCC and it has, after an initial review, disapproved of the uniform code.

This sub-committee includes SGPC general secretary Gurcharan Singh Grewal, senior lawyer Puran Singh Hundal, SGPC members Bhagwant Singh Sialka, Paramjit Kaur Landran, and Kiranjot Kaur, Prof Kashmir Singh, Dr Inderjit Singh Gogoani, Dr Parmveer Singh, and Dr Chamkaur Singh.

Water level rising fast in Jhelum, tributaries due to continued rain

PTI ■ SRINAGAR

The water level in the Jhelum river and its tributaries has risen rapidly over a few hours due to heavy rainfall at many places in Kashmir, crossing the flood alert mark at some places.

Authorities have advised the people living near the embankments of water bodies to remain alert and avoid venturing near the water.

An official of the Irrigation and Flood Control (IFC) department on Saturday said the valley received a considerable amount of rainfall during the night and the "water level (discharge) in the tributaries or nullahs of the Jhelum basin is expected to rise in the coming hours."

He added that the water level in the Jhelum is also on the rise and is being monitored.

The water level in the Jhelum has crossed flood alert or flood declaration mark at some places, including at Sangam in south Kashmir's Anantnag district, and Pampore, and Ram Munshi Bagh here, the official said.

"People should avoid venturing near them," he added.

The water level is expected to experience a rising trend until Sunday, the official said.



Heavy to very heavy rain continued in many parts of Kashmir for the second day on Saturday. Some places witnessed a record rainfall over the 24-hour period.

A few areas in the higher reaches, including near the Amarnath cave shrine, experienced snowfall.

The annual Amarnath Yatra was suspended for the second consecutive day on Saturday due to inclement weather conditions.

The meteorological department said intermittent light to moderate rain is likely to continue at most places in Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday, with the possibility of a heavy to very heavy rain at isolated places of the Jammu division.

From July 10 to 14, the weather is likely to remain generally cloudy with intermittent thundershowers at a few places towards the evening

or early morning, the department said.

The MeT office has asked those living in the lower catchment areas to remain alert as there is a possibility of flash floods, landslides or mudslides.

Temporary waterlogging and minor floods in low-lying areas may also be witnessed, it said.

The weather system can lead to a temporary disruption of transportation over the Srinagar-Jammu national highway, Mughal Road, the Srinagar-Leh highway and other major hilly roads, the officials said.

Light snowfall at a few places in the higher reaches of the Kashmir division may also occur, they added.

The administration in several districts has issued advisories to people, asking them to remain cautious, and has set up control rooms for any eventuality.

15 killed in Bengal...

From Page 1

Addressing a Press conference here, he alleged that a Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee-led Government has been using criminals for violence during the elections by giving them protection.

Peaceful polling was reported in booths where the Opposition parties and local voters succumbed to false voting by ruling party members.

Despite inside sources at the State Election Commission (SEC) stating that polling reached around 55-60 per cent by 5 pm, Opposition parties feared that the polling rate might surge to over 80 per cent overnight due to the alleged nexus between the TMC and the SEC.

Throughout the day, clashes resulted in the looting, burning, and throwing of ballot boxes into ponds. Presiding officers and other poll officials were severely beaten in many booths and had to be hospitalised.

Even the police officers who attempted to control the mobs were not spared.

Soon after polling commenced, three TMC members were killed in Murshidabad. A CPI (M) worker who was injured in East Burdwan later succumbed to his injuries on Saturday.

While the Opposition parties held SEC Rajiva Sinha responsible for the day's mayhem, the poll panel chief, who is allegedly close to Mamata, stated, "The Commission cannot guarantee who will shoot whom during the elections... my job was to plan everything... now it is for the district administrations to explain their conduct."

In a strong response, Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari declared, "This is the right time for Article 355 or 356 in Bengal, as you cannot expect any democracy in Bengal under Mamata."

The senior BJP leader demanded a CBI investigation into the poll violence on Saturday.

"The Commission had stated that all 95 per cent of booths would be covered by CCTV... we want all those

CCTV footage to be scrutinized, and if it is evident that polls were not conducted freely and fairly, we will demand re-polling in those booths," he added.

Meanwhile, State Congress leader and lawyer Kaustav Bagchi called for criminal prosecution of the SEC for its conduct since the announcement of the polls. "Despite the High Court's order, out of 822 companies of Central forces, 16 companies did not arrive... the forces that did come were not deployed in many places and were taken on joyrides from here to there... this necessitates a judicial inquiry."

Pradesh Congress president Adhir Chowdhury alleged that polling was conducted late at night in many places.

He claimed, "Ballot boxes were taken out at night, false votes were cast, and then they were put back into the boxes before being returned to the polling booths."

Chowdhury sarcastically congratulated Mamata for her meticulous planning to deceive the people of Bengal.

Railways to cut AC chair, EC classes fares by 25%...

From Page 1

The discount may be provided in any or all the classes on the basis of occupancy."

The Rail Ministry has decided to delegate powers to principal chief commercial managers of railway zones to introduce discounted fare schemes in trains with AC seating, with a view to optimising utilisation of accommodation.

"The discount shall be implemented with immediate effect. However, no refund of fare shall be admissible for already booked passengers," it said. In the case of trains where flexi fare is applicable in a particular class and the occupancy is poor, the scheme can be withdrawn initially as a measure to increase the occupancy.

This scheme will not be applicable on special trains introduced as holiday or festival specials.

The decision to cut fares was taken by the Railway Board in a bid to optimise utilisation of accommodation in trains. According to the board, trains having "classes

with occupancy less than 50 per cent (either end-to-end or in some specified legs/sections depending upon the sections where discount is to be provided) during the last 30 days shall be taken into consideration."

The fares of competitive modes of transport will be the criteria while deciding the quantum of discount.

The discount can be for the first and/or last leg of the journey and/or intermediate sections and/or end-to-end journey provided the occupancy is less than 50 per cent in that leg/section/end-to-end.

In the case of trains where flexi fare is applicable in a particular class and the occupancy is poor, the scheme can be withdrawn initially as a measure to increase the occupancy.

This scheme will not be applicable on special trains introduced as holiday or festival specials.

The discounts will be implemented through the IRCTC website and app. Passengers can book tickets at

discounted fares once the scheme is rolled out.

Here are some of the key details of the scheme:

The discounts will be applicable on AC chair cars and executive classes of all trains, including Vande Bharat, and those with Anubhuti and Vistadome coaches.

The discounts will be up to 25 per cent, depending on occupancy.

The discounts will be applicable for a period of one year.

The fares of competitive modes of transport will be the criteria while deciding the quantum of discount.

The discounts can be given for the first and/or last leg of the journey and/or intermediate sections and/or end-to-end journey provided the occupancy is less than 50 per cent in that leg/section/end-to-end.

The discounts will be implemented through the IRCTC website and app.

Passengers can book tickets at discounted fares once the scheme is rolled out.

From Page 1

The Prime Minister expressed his dismay, saying, "There used to be news about agreements between two countries or States on development projects. There used to be news about agreements between two States for water. But this is the first time allegations of corruption deals between two parties and two State Governments have been made. This is unfortunate."

Although indirectly referring to the AAP and BRS, Modi refrained from explicitly naming them.

Characterising Chief Minister Rao's Government as the "most corrupt," Modi claimed that there is no project in Telangana that is immune to corruption allegations.

Speaking at a public gathering after laying the foundation stone for various projects worth Rs 6,100 crore, Modi criticised the BRS Government for resorting to an extensive range of abusive language against the Central Government. He also emphasised that Telangana now favours a BJP Government, using the slogan 'ab ki baar, BJP sarkar'.

RAIN PARALYSES CITY

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The national Capital region on Saturday witnessed heavy rainfall that created mayhem in residential and commercial areas, with inundated roads and overflowing drains leading to massive waterlogging and paralysed traffic for hours, making life difficult for commuters and proving to be a nightmare for traders.

The morning rain that continued for several hours led to water gushing into the store-rooms of the city's most popular shopping destination, Connaught Place, and led to a closure of the Minto Bridge underpass for traffic due to waterlogging. Strong winds and showers also caused disruptions in power and internet connectivity in some areas. A 58-year-old woman was killed coming under the debris of a ceiling of a Tibbia College Society flat that collapsed Saturday morning apparently due to heavy rain.

With Delhi getting 126.1 mm rainfall between 8:30 am to 5:30 pm, the India Meteorological Department said an interaction of a western disturbance and monsoonal winds led to an intense rainfall spell over northwest India, including Delhi which experienced the season's first heavy rain.

The mess caused by the heavy rain also exposed the preparations of various civic bodies ahead of September, when six G20 Summit events, including the summit meeting, are scheduled to take place in the national capital. Motorists and pedestrians had a hard time navigating waterlogged roads, flyovers and footpaths, while traders faced trouble stopping the rain water entering their shops in several areas. This was the season's first heavy spell of rain.

The Safdarjung observatory, Delhi's primary weather sta-



Vehicles make their way under a waterlogged underpass following heavy monsoon rains, near Apollo hospital, Okhla, in New Delhi

tion, recorded 98.7 mm rainfall till 2.30 pm. The Ridge observatory recorded 111.4 mm rainfall. The Lodhi Road recorded 92.0 mm and Pitampura 81.5 mm. The public works department (PWD) received 100 complaints of waterlogging. Minto Road was closed for vehicular traffic for half an hour due to a Delhi Jal Board (DJB) drain overflowing.

The Minto Bridge has been closed for vehicular traffic due to the incessant rains that have led to waterlogging. Heavy waterlogging was also reported from the Tilak Bridge underpass. Several locals in east and north east Delhi complained over waterlogging as drains were not desilted ahead of the monsoon.

Amit Gupta, a trader at Connaught Place, said the tall claims of Delhi being a Smart City are exposed every year during monsoon, when shops get flooded and the traders face losses. New Delhi Traders' Association president Atul Bhargava said, "The government only

wants to collect taxes. We have not been involved in the development of Connaught Place. Only beautification is being done."

Commuters stuck in traffic took to social media to narrate their ordeal. One of them said the traffic was heavy on Vikas Marg, from Laxmi Nagar to ITO. The ITO area witnessed massive traffic snarls due to the waterlogging at the Tilak bridge underpass and Minto Bridge.

According to traffic police, it has received 56 water logging complaints across Delhi by 3 pm. Waterlogging was reported from the Pandav Nagar underpass, Purana Quila Road, Sun Dial Park on Ring Road, the Sarita Vihar chowk, the carriage-way between gate number 6 and 7, Pragati Maidan on Mathura Road, near Nizamuddin Khatta, Mayur Vihar Phase-2, Dwarka Link Road, NH-48 near Shiv Murli, Rohtak Road, Vikas Marg, under the AIIMS flyover, under the Moolchand flyover, MB Road, Mother Teresa Crescent-Sardar Patel Marg,

under Tilak Bridge, Najafgarh etc., the traffic police said.

The calls related to fallen trees were received from Jantar Mantar Road, Chandgi Ram Akhara, Amrita Shergil Marg, DDU Marg, Dhirpur Main Road and Mother Teresa Crescent. Sunlight Colony, Raja Puri, Bharat Darshan Park, the Shadipur metro station and the Buta Singh roundabout were the locations from where the pot-hole-related calls were received, the traffic police said.

Two areas within the jurisdiction of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) also reported incidents of trees falling. Some of the areas that reported waterlogging are Harijan Colony in Kalkaji, Jangpura extension, Nabi Karim in Paharganj and Gautam Puri in Shahdara, according to MCD officials.

Meanwhile, the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) reported 24 cases of waterlogging and fallen trees. According to the data shared by NDMC officials, five trees were uproot-

ed and 11 incidents of broken branches recorded in Lutyens' Delhi.

Amit Gupta, a trader at Connaught Place, said the tall claims of Delhi being a Smart City are exposed every year during monsoon, when shops get flooded and the traders face losses.

New Delhi Traders' Association president Atul Bhargava claimed that the "faulty" Panchkuian road slope directs rain water towards Connaught Place and no action has so far been taken by the authorities in this regard. "This was the first spell of heavy rain and many shopkeepers are trying to save their goods. The same scene was witnessed during monsoon before the COVID-19 pandemic," Bhargava said.

The Delhi Traffic Police took to Twitter to inform the commuters about the traffic condition across the city. "Traffic is affected on Aurobindo Marg in the carriageway from IIT towards PTS Malviya Nagar and vice-versa due to waterlogging. Kindly avoid the stretch," it said. Kamla Nagar Market Traders' Association president Nitin Gupta said almost all the shops have been flooded.

"Today's rains have truly turned Delhi into a lake. Almost all the shops in Kamla Nagar have been flooded. The customers are finding it difficult to come to the market. The situation is such that as if we are facing a shortage of boats," he said.

In a statement, the Delhi Traffic Police said calls regarding traffic congestion, failure of traffic signals and waterlogging as well as uprooting of trees and potholes on the roads were received at the traffic control room. Incidents of power failure were also reported from many parts of the city, which resulted in non-functioning of signals and manning of signalised intersections by traffic personnel, it said.



Heaviest rain in a day in 20 years Clogged drainage exposed

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The incessant rainfall has exposed the inadequacies of the city's drainage system and washed away the tall claims of civic agencies as road after road went under water and massive traffic jams complaints from several pockets of the national Capital.

According to the India Meteorological Department, Delhi on Saturday witnessed the season's first very heavy rain and the highest in a day in 20 years. The Safdarjung Observatory, the city's primary weather station, recorded 126.1 mm of rainfall between 8.30 am and 5.30 pm, the highest since the 24-hour rainfall of 133.4 mm on July 10, 2003, a senior IMD official said. The city logged an all-time high of 266.2 mm on July 21, 1958.

Over the years, Delhi's drainage system has fallen prey to encroachment and poor planning. Most storm water drains in the Capital are the ones that have been carved out by the natural flow of water over hundreds of years. With unplanned development taking place in the Capital, many of them were encroached upon, covered and obstructed.

This means the water did not have an outlet anymore. To

add to the problems, several sewer networks have been mixed with storm water drains and when it rains, the system gets overwhelmed.

Delhi has three major drainage basins: Najafgarh, Barapullah, and Trans-Yamuna. During rainfall, storm water on the eastern side of the central ridge directly flows into the Yamuna. On the western side, smaller drains merge into the Najafgarh drain, which eventually empties into the river.

The eastern region of Delhi is low-lying and was originally part of the Yamuna floodplain. The existing storm water drainage system in Delhi is prone to congestion, primarily caused by waste and sewage, leading to sluggish water flow. Different parts of Delhi experience annual flooding due to factors such as excessive concrete structures, disappearance of water bodies, encroachments on the storm water drains, and the discharge of untreated sewage and waste.

The management of the drainage system involves multiple agencies, further complicating the situation, according to the city government's state action plan for climate change. The last drainage master plan for Delhi was created in 1976 when the city's population was approximately 6 million.

Netizens vent ire on Twitter

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhiites woke up to the city flooded following incessant rains. Several Delhi residents took to Twitter to express disappointment over the mismanagement by the authorities and lack of proper drainage systems and slammed the Kejriwal government.

Many also tagged and called out the Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, questioning his management. People shared visuals of the heavy waterlogging in residential as well as commuting areas, with vehicles half submerged in the rainwater.

Some Twitter users directly took a dig at CM Arvind Kejriwal, claiming that the administration is entirely clueless about measures to tackle the situation that is getting worse as the downpour continues. "Thank you Arvind Kejriwal for making Delhi into Venice", a Twitter user wrote.

Another social media user said, "Delhi is proud of @ArvindKejriwal #Delhirains You have fulfilled your promise".

Another Twitter user wrote, "At first, I believed it to be Spain or Venice, but then I observed an auto and people referring to the location as Chota Haridwar. It is our Delhi capital of India the mother of Democracy".

Meanwhile, government sources said there was more than 100mm rain in a single day, which is 15% of the total rain fall Delhi gets every monsoon.

This much water cannot be drained while the rain is still on. Once they rain stopped, the water cleared rapidly into the drainage system of the city.

With the showers bringing back the familiar scenes of waterlogged roads and long lines of vehicles stuck in the deluge, residents expressed anguish over Delhi's "poor drainage system".

116 pvt staffers hired by Govt worked as AAP proxies: BJP



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Saturday launched a fresh attack on Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, alleging that 116 AAP volunteers were given jobs as fellow and associate fellows and their salaries borne by the Delhi government exchequer. According to BJP, these 116 AAP volunteers who have since deleted their social media accounts — have surfaced, showing that they were working for the AAP despite getting salaries from the government.

The BJP leaders said these appointments reveal the intentions of the AAP government and its desire to control the Service Department. As per details provided by the BJP, these experts and fellows include Ram Kumar Jha personal Body Guard and Bouncer of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who gets a salary of Rs 60,000.

Jha can be often seen several video roughing up media persons trying to reach Kejriwal, apart openly canvassing for Jha and AAP. Nisha Singh, who is paid Rs 1 Lakh was attached to Sisodia and has been convicted for a 7 year term for inciting mob violence.

Anchal Bawa Pathak, who is paid Rs 1 Lakh, in an blatant conflict of interest and obvious favoritism, is the wife of Kejriwal's henchman and MLA, Durgesh Pathak. Akshay Malhotra is also a personal staff and drives his vehicle and also does social media work, he is also working on government salary.

Manoj Kumar Jha, ex Media man and currently Chief Media Advisor to DJB, gets Rs 1.5 Lakh. While none of his work is for the DJB, he openly canvasses for AAP in elections. Praveen Kumar Chadar, who gets Rs 1 Lakh as an

Associate fellow, openly trolls and abuses BJP and Congress leaders and bats for AAP on Social Media.

Nitin Bhatta is Associate Fellow and has no work other than praising Arvind Kejriwal in his tweets and salary is full one lakh.

One name is Priyadarshini and salary Rs 1.25 lakh and you are the Vice President of Haryana Youth Wing Shalini Yadav is also one of them, Business World also wrote about her that she has come to change politics and now only work is to praise Arvind Kejriwal and in return salary is one lakh rupees and there are 42 to 45 names whose work is the same.

According to BJP leaders, these appointments reveal the intentions of the AAP government and its desire to control the Service Department and demanded an inquiry whether any monetary transactions were involved in these appointments.

Sudhanshu Trivedi, the BJP's national spokesperson and Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said the names of several people who worked for Kejriwal but got salaries from the Delhi government have surfaced. Trivedi alleged during a press conference that a new character of Arvind Kejriwal and the AAP has been revealed where party workers appointed on government salaries do partywork while holding government positions.

Demanding an inquiry, the Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said appointments were made without considering the qualifications, experience, and regulations and most of these appointments were given to AAP volunteers, who were provided salaries amounting to millions of rupees even without the required qualifications.

BJP's allegations baseless: AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Reacting on the allegations, the AAP said the BJP has labelled these individuals, who are contractual employees of the Delhi government, as AAP workers based on their social media posts or likes.

"It's also laughable that in its rush to levy these baseless allegations, the BJP has released the names of several individuals who have no connection whatsoever with the Delhi government or the Aam Aadmi Party," it said.

"For instance, Nisha Singh, who worked as an advisor in the Deputy Chief Minister's office for a nominal salary of one rupee until 2019, is no longer associated with the government. Similarly, Priyadarshini Singh, whom the BJP claims is an



AAP worker from Haryana, has no affiliation with the Delhi government."

"However, there is a professional with similar name associated with the Delhi government who is a graduate of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIM Ahmedabad), and who left a high-paying job in MNC to work for the Delhi government to serve the people of Delhi. All of this only goes to show BJP's frustration at the growing popularity of the Kejriwal government," AAP said in a statement.

'Centre using ED, CBI to defame AAP'

No corruption in excise policy, says Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

AAP National Convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Cabinet Minister Atishi on Saturday lashed out at the Prime Minister Narendra Modi for using the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) as tools to suppress the AAP government's progress.

He expressed his concern about the Prime Minister's actions, stating that the central agencies are interfering with the functioning of the AAP government and tarnishing the party's reputation with baseless



accusations. Kejriwal said PM Modi's failure to effectively govern the country has compelled him to resort to defaming AAP through the misuse of ED-CBI.

This comes a day after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) said it has attached two immovable assets owned by Sisodia and his wife, apart from bank deposits worth Rs 11.49 lakh, in the Delhi excise policy-linked money laundering case.

Kejriwal emphasised that there is "not a single ounce of

corruption" in the excise policy that was implemented by the AAP government in Delhi.

Addressing the fake news being spread by BJP against Sisodia, the chief minister clarified that Sisodia owns two flats valued at 5 and 65 lakhs, respectively, and has a modest bank balance of only 11 lakhs. He asserted that these properties were purchased before the formation of the excise policy and are completely unrelated to the alleged liquor case.

He emphasised that the AAP leader's assets are fully disclosed in their income tax filings and election declarations.

Kejriwal said that as per ED papers, one flat was purchased by Shri Manish Sisodia in 2004-05, valued at 5 lakh rupees, while the second flat was acquired in 2018 for 65 lakh rupees. Additionally, he has 11 lakh rupees in his bank account.

"These properties and the alleged liquor case are completely unrelated," he said.

Earlier Senior AAP leader and Delhi Cabinet Minister Atishi addressed a press conference and slammed at the BJP and the Centre, accusing them of spreading lies about jailed former Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia and attempting to defame him. Atishi alleged that as per an ED document, Sisodia has assets worth Rs 81 lakh.

Govt schools' students clearing competitive exams has increased 3 folds: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday said the number of Delhi government school students clearing competitive exams has increased three folds in the last two years.

Addressing students who have cleared the National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test (NEET) and the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) at the Thyagaraj Stadium, he said the country cannot develop until every child gets equal and quality education. "This stadium today is filled with success as 1,391 students qualified for NEET, 730 students cleared the JEE-Main and 106 students cleared the JEE-Advanced this year. Two years ago, 64 students had cleared JEE-Advanced, 384 students cleared the JEE-Main and 496 students had qualified for NEET," Kejriwal said. The chief minister said education is the key for the growth of the country.

"Education is highly necessary for the development of the country. The government schools in Delhi used to be in poor condition earlier, and now, even the parents of the students acknowledge the transformation



we brought in the same government schools," he said.

Highlighting the significant progress made in Delhi's government schools, CM Shri Arvind Kejriwal emphasised the government's understanding of the importance of education. He also shared a personal anecdote, revealing his choice to stay in India after completing his studies at the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology (IIT). "When I completed IIT, 90% students used to go abroad, I could have gone too, but didn't. I had a feeling that if all the good students go out then who will serve the country?" Kejriwal added.

Education Minister Atishi said when a student from a government school secures admission to institutions such as IITs and AIIMS, it not only propels their own progress but also instils hope among millions of underprivileged children.

LG approves extension of services of 962 nursing staff

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has approved the proposal for extension of services of 962 Nursing staff, presently working at the Hospitals and Medical Institutions of Delhi government on contractual basis. The extension of services of 962 nursing staff comes a few days after the LG in a similar move approved the extension of services of 777 contractual para-medical employees and 476 part-time vocational teachers in the Health and Family Welfare Department and the Education Department of Delhi government.

According to a statement issued by Raj Niwas, Saxena agreed with the proposal of the Department of Health & Family



Welfare seeking extension of services of contractual nursing employees for another one year with effect from 01.07.2023 to 30.06.2024, with the instruction to the Health Department and DSSSB to notify the vacant posts against which these contractual employees are hired and also conduct tests for regular appointments within a specific timeframe.

"Additionally, the Health

Department may also provide an Action Taken Report in this matter within three months for his perusal, the LG has said. While disposing the file, Saxena noted that extensions for contractual appointments were granted to these employees against regular sanctioned posts from time-to-time. The proposal for the last extension of one year with effect from July 01, 2022 was approved by the LG last year with the rider that the Health Department fills these regular positions with permanent employees selected through the due process. However, the Health Department could not do the same till now and the current approval has been given in light of the emergent nature of the work performed by these contractual nurses.

SI, son beaten over plot ownership

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi police Sub Inspector and his 34 year old son were allegedly attacked over the ownership of a residential plot in Burari on Friday.

Four accused has been arrested so far and search is on for other persons accused in the case, according to police. The accused and the victim both claim ownership of the plot, the police said.

According to the complainant, Rohit Giri, he was overseeing the construction of a boundary wall around the plot around 2 pm on Friday, a senior police officer said. At that time, a Maruti Suzuki Baleno arrived and five people got down from the car. One of them identified himself as Ajay and claimed that the plot belonged to him, Deputy Commissioner of Police (North) Sagar Singh Kalsi said.

As an argument ensued between the pair, more people arrived and started to assault Giri with iron rods and sticks. He managed to escape from his attackers and ran towards the Amrit Vihar bus stand, Kalsi said.

Gangster Sube's 3 aides held

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

Three men associated with jailed gangster Sube Gurjar were arrested for allegedly threatening Ghamroj toll plaza staff with guns to give up the toll contract, police said on Saturday. A manpower contractor

of Sohna Road toll plaza had on Friday filed a complaint at Bhondsi Police Station alleging that the previous night 5-7 individuals arrived at the toll plaza in a Scorpio car carrying double-barrel guns and threatened him to vacate the space by morning. According to police, the

alleged goons told the contractor that their men would take over the plaza next morning and if their demands were not met, the contractor would be responsible for his own death. A case in the matter was lodged on Friday at the Bhondsi Police Station.

Cong means 'loot ki dukaan' & 'jhooth ka bazaar': Modi

PTI ■ BIKANER

Accusing the Congress of indulging in corruption and deceit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday dubbed the party as a 'loot ki dukaan' and 'jhooth ka bazaar' and said it is clear from people's 'anger' in Rajasthan the Ashok Gehlot government is on its way out.

Addressing a public rally at Norangdesar here, the prime minister alleged the Congress government has carved a new identity for itself when it comes to corruption, crime and politics of appeasement.

"In terms of crime against women, Rajasthan tops the list in rape cases. The situation is such that here the protectors are becoming the predators. The whole government here seems to be busy in saving rape

and murder accused," Modi alleged.

Coming down heavily on the Congress, he said if it remains in power, it makes the country hollow and when it goes out of power, it defames the country by abusing it.

Their leaders go abroad and abuse India, while BJP workers sacrifice everything for the sake of the nation, Modi said.

The Congress government has done a lot of damage to Rajasthan in four years and its defeat in Rajasthan "is so certain that its government has already entered a 'bye-bye mode'," he said.

"I have come to know that some ministers and legislators have already vacated their government bungalows and shifted to their homes. Only Congress leaders can be so con-

fidant of their defeat," he said.

Public anger against the Rajasthan government has risen, and when this happens it takes no time to unseat those in power, Modi said.

"There is only one meaning of the Congress... 'loot ki dukaan' and 'jhooth ka bazaar,'" the prime minister said in an obvious jibe at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's frequent remarks about his party opening 'mohabbat ki dukaan' in 'nafarat ka bazaar'.

He said Rajasthan, the country's desert state where elections are due later this year, should have been at the top in the implementation of piped water project Jal Jeevan Mission, but today it is among the laggard states.

He also accused the state government of "misleading" people by announcing schemes



and making promises as the election approaches.

"In all these tall promises, there is nothing but 'loot ke irade aur jhooth ka pitara' (intention of loot and bundle of lies)," he said, adding the farmers of Rajasthan are the biggest victims of the Congress' "politics of lie and deceit".

He said while the Rajasthan Congress is mired in

internal feuds, the chief minister is busy trying to save his son's future, "not worried about the future of the sons and daughters of Rajasthan. Many ministers and legislators are bitter towards him".

Without naming Rahul Gandhi, Modi said that ahead of the 2018 elections, he had promised to waive farmers' loan within 10 days of coming to power, and asked people if it is has been done.

Hatred towards farmers is the nature and reality of Congress, he alleged, adding the party has a problem with the army and soldiers too.

Congress leaders asked for evidence on surgical strike, and on air strike, they said that nothing like that had happened, Modi charged.

On the internal tussle between Gehlot and his former

deputy Sachin Pilot, the PM said without naming them that since the Congress government came to power in the state everyone is pulling each other's legs.

"There is open bargaining to make their factions strong. The fight is not limited to factions only, all ministers are also fighting among themselves... The government is engaged in this tussle," Modi said.

"There can be no hope of development under these people," he said.

"Today, I want to tell these people bluntly enough of this 'Noora Kushti' (fixed fight). Now, the public will decide in the arena of democracy... Now Rajasthan needs a stable government, a double-engine government, Rajasthan needs 'Vikasvaad', not 'Parivarvaad', he said.

He pointed to incidents of communal tension and also took a swipe over paper leak cases.

"A new industry of paper leak has opened in the state," he said. Union Minister of State for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Arjun Ram Meghwal said that due to the investment-friendly policies of the Modi government, Bikaner has become a hub of solar energy.

Bikaner will become a ceramic hub in the days to come, he said.

Union ministers Nitin Gadkari, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, former chief minister Vasundhara Raje, BJP state president CP Joshi, Leader of Opposition Rajendra Rathore, deputy leader of opposition Satish Poonia and other party leaders were present at the rally.

Have resolved differences with Gehlot: Pilot

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Sachin Pilot clarified on Saturday that he has resolved his differences with Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on the advice of party president Mallikarjun Kharge, emphasizing the significance of collective leadership as the way forward for the upcoming assembly polls.

In an exclusive interview with PTI, Pilot shared, "Kharge advised me to 'forgive and forget' and move forward. It was a valuable suggestion."

Pilot acknowledged the experience and seniority of Ashok Gehlot, stating, "Ashok Gehlot ji is older than me, and he has shouldered heavy responsibilities. When I was the Rajasthan Congress president, I made efforts to unite everyone. Today, as Chief Minister, Gehlot is working towards inclusivity."

Regarding past disagreements and criticisms, Pilot said that during a meeting with him, Kharge emphasized the importance of focusing on the future and leaving the past behind.

"He (Kharge) urged us to forgive, forget, and look forward. This approach applies to everyone. I believe in it. We must move ahead, face new challenges, and work together for the betterment of Rajasthan. The success of the Congress is crucial for our nation. We need



the blessings of the people of Rajasthan, and to achieve that, we must stand united and align with the aspirations of both the people and party workers," Pilot explained.

He added, "It is unproductive to dwell on who said what, when. I have always maintained a respectful and dignified approach in my public life."

Pilot further expressed, "Our focus now is to win the elections. Individual statements and personal disputes are irrelevant. We must leave them in the past and concentrate on the task at hand."

These comments from Pilot came after a crucial strategy meeting of the Rajasthan Congress on Thursday, attended by Kharge, former party chief Rahul Gandhi, AICC in-charge for Rajasthan Sukhjinder Randhawa, Rajasthan Pradesh Congress

Committee president Govind Dotasra, along with several MLAs and ministers from the state. Gehlot, who is currently recovering from toe injuries, participated in the meeting via video conferencing.

Following the meeting, the Congress emphasized the importance of unity for a victorious outcome in the upcoming Rajasthan assembly elections. The party also issued a warning against indiscipline and speaking against the party's interests outside of the party forum. Furthermore, the party indicated that it may not declare a chief ministerial candidate for the upcoming polls.

Responding to Congress general secretary in-charge organization KC Venugopal's statement that the party never announces the chief ministerial candidate, Pilot stated, "I believe Mr. Venugopal's remark is accurate. During elections, it

is not about individual candidates. In the 2018 elections, when I served as the state party president, we fought unitedly without declaring a specific CM face. The decision regarding leadership is made after the elections."

Pilot stressed that the Congress government in Rajasthan is not about individuals but about the party as a whole. The leadership at both the national and state levels functions as a collective unit, guided by the ideology of the Congress party.

"Our performance and policies are not driven by individuals; they are based on the values and principles of the Congress party. Our cabinet, Chief Minister, and all party members work together. Victory or defeat is not determined by one person but by the collective effort of the team," Pilot emphasized.

Regarding the challenge of anti-incumbency, which has prevailed in Rajasthan for the past 25 years, Pilot expressed concern and stated, "It is troubling to see that after forming a government, we often face significant setbacks in subsequent elections."

When asked about the importance of collective leadership in Rajasthan, Pilot firmly stated, "It is the only way to move forward."

He elaborated, "No individual can claim to possess the magic formula for winning

elections. It is always a collective effort. More than individual leaders, it is the workers who play a crucial role. We need to motivate our workers, ensure their commitment and involvement. Rahul Gandhi has rightly emphasized the involvement of party workers in decision-making processes."

Pilot acknowledged the presence of anti-incumbency sentiment in Rajasthan, which exists in various other places as well, as governments often have unfulfilled promises and unfinished work. However, he believes that the people recognize the genuine intentions of the Congress party and its government. He emphasized the importance of effectively implementing government schemes and taking them to the grassroots level to ensure their impact. Pilot also advocated for the selection of candidates based on winnability rather than factional affiliations within the party. He emphasized the need to encourage and provide opportunities for younger leaders to showcase their capabilities during the elections.

When asked about his role moving forward, Pilot expressed his unwavering commitment to serving the party and stated that he would accept any decision taken by the party high command. However, he added that his heart lies in Rajasthan, a sentiment he has always openly expressed.

India, Malaysia to review ties during Rajnath's visit



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Malaysia will review the entire spectrum of their bilateral defence ties and find ways to enhance them during Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's two-day visit starting Monday.

Giving details of his schedule, defence ministry officials said here on Saturday, Rajnath's visit will focus on further consolidating bilateral defence cooperation and Enhanced Strategic Partnership.

He will hold bilateral talks with Defence Minister of Malaysia Dato' Seri Mohamad Hasan, during which both the Ministers will review defence cooperation between the two countries and explore new initiatives to further

strengthen the engagements. The two sides will also exchange views on regional and global issues of shared interest.

Rajnath Singh will also call on Prime Minister of Malaysia YB Dato' Seri Anwar bin Ibrahim.

India and Malaysia have a common interest in the peace and prosperity of the entire region.

The two democracies have a robust and multifaceted relationship which has expanded into several strategic areas, including defence and security.

Both the countries are committed to working under the vision of Enhanced Strategic Partnership established during the visit of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to Malaysia in 2015.

RSS raps Digvijay for 'false' charge against Golwalkar



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Digvijay Singh on Saturday attributed some comments to MS Golwalkar suggesting the former RSS chief was against equal rights to Dalits, backwards and Muslims, drawing a sharp rebuttal from the Hindutva organisation.

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh accused Singh of attributing "false" statements to Golwalkar through a "photoshopped" picture, saying it was aimed at creating social disharmony.

Singh had tweeted a picture of a page carrying several controversial comments quoted to the former RSS head, known as Guruji among his admirers.

The second RSS chief was quoted as saying that he would rather live under the British rule than have equal rights given to Dalits, backwards and Muslims. Some other controversial comments were also attributed to him.

Stray dogs carry drug-resistant Candida auris, say Scientists

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Scientists at McMaster University and the University of Delhi have discovered and isolated the first live culture of the drug-resistant pathogen Candida auris from the ear canals of lesions-infected stray dogs. The finding suggests that these dogs could be a reservoir for the superbug and potentially transmit infections to humans.

The study, published online in the Journal of Fungi, calls for further investigation. The World Health Organization has declared Candida auris as one of the world's four "critical priority" fungal pathogens.

The researchers tested skin and ear swab samples from 87 dogs housed in a shelter in Delhi. Of those, 42 were strays



already under intensive care for severe lesions due to chronic skin diseases. The remaining 35 dogs were household pets treated for minor gastrointestinal and urinary infections. The subjects' conditions were not related to the pathogen under study.

The swabs were analyzed for bacteria and fungi cultures using routine diagnostic protocols for skin and ear infections. Researchers found evidence of C. auris within the ear

canals of four of the animals with chronic skin infections.

"Dogs are common pets. Even though C. auris was only found in stray dogs in this study, there are many stray dogs in many parts of the world. These dogs could act as transmission vehicles for C. auris to reach other animals and humans," said Jianping Xu, a lead author on the paper and a professor in the Department of Biology at McMaster University.

BSF condoles death of 1971 B'desh war veteran

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Border Security Force (BSF) has condoled the death of one of its veterans for his stellar role in the 1971 Bangladesh liberation war.

Director General & All Ranks of Border Security Force condole the passing of Parimal Kumar Ghosh, DIG (Retd), and pay tributes to his stellar role in the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh," the BSF said in a tweet.

Ghosh joined the BSF in August 1970, (after having been commissioned into the Regiment of Artillery, Indian Army, in Feb 1965), and served in Jammu & Kashmir, Tripura, Meghalaya and other North Eastern States, the paramilitary said in a statement.

"P K Ghosh (operating under the name Captain Ali)



played a significant role during the early stages of Bangladesh Liberation War and is credited with a number of operations that enabled the Mukti Bahini against the West Pakistani forces," the BSF said.

Ghosh also served as a senior diplomat in the Indian embassy, Paris apart from serving in various parts of the country.

BSF recovers drone

New Delhi: The BSF on Saturday recovered a drone shot down by its troops in Tarn Taran district of Punjab. "On 07th July 2023 around 0905 PM, BSF intercepted movement of a suspected drone near Village - Pallopati, District - Tarn Taran.

President Murmu to inaugurate Visitor's Conference on Monday

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu will on Monday inaugurate a two-day Visitor's Conference, to be held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here, an official statement issued on Saturday said.

She will also present the Visitor's Awards 2021 in the categories of 'Innovation', 'Research', and 'Technology Development' on the same day, it said.

The President is the Visitor of 162 central institutions of higher learning.

"Rashtrapati Bhavan will host the Visitor's Conference 2023 on July 10 and 11," the statement said.

Before the commencement of the conference,



President Murmu will present the Visitor's Awards 2021 on Monday.

The Visitor's Award for Innovation will be conferred on Prof Venkatesh Singh from the School of Physical and Chemical Sciences, Central University of South Bihar for developing indigenous charge pick-up panels for resistive plate chamber detector using silicon fibre sheet.

TMC accuses Opp of orchestrating violence; confident of panchayat poll win

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The ruling TMC on Saturday accused the Opposition of orchestrating violence during the panchayat polls in West Bengal, while asserting that the party will emerge victorious in a majority of the seats when the votes are counted on July 11.

Dismissing allegations of the state administration letting loose a reign of terror, state minister Bratya Basu claimed that it is the Trinamool Congress which has been at the "receiving end of the violence perpetrated by the opposition."

"Of the 22 districts that went to rural polls, no incident of violence was reported in 16. Of the nearly 61,000 booths,

incidents were reported in only 60. So, one can ascertain the ratio of violence in comparison with the areas where polls were held peacefully. It is lesser than one per cent," another minister, Shashi Panja, said.

She fished out data to push her party's claims that out of the total deaths that took place both on the day of polling and throughout the entire election process, "nearly 60 per cent casualties were from the TMC."

West Bengal's rural polls drew towards a bloody finish as 12 people died, bombs exploded, and all parties levelled allegations of strong-arm tactics against their rivals on Saturday.

Twelve people, including eight from the ruling TMC and one worker each of the BJP,



CPI(M), Congress and ISF, died since midnight in the crucial three-tier panchayat polls, officials said.

"A narrative is being spun by the opposition parties with the help of the Governor (C V Ananda Bose) and a section of the media that elections in

West Bengal are always violent. There have been few instances of violence, but if you compare with previous elections, you will see that the incidents of violence and deaths have gone down drastically," TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh claimed.

Since the day the polls were announced on June 8, violence was reported in various parts of the state, leading to the death of nearly 30 people, including a dozen on the day of polling.

The 2003 panchayat polls gained notoriety for its death toll of 76, with more than 40 killed on the day of the elections.

The 2013 rural polls, held under the supervision of central forces, and the 2018 elections recorded fatality figures of 39 and 30, respectively.

"We condemn all incidents of violence. But the fact is that elections have been more or less peaceful in a majority of the areas, which the media and the opposition are not talking

about," he said.

He also alleged that the BSF has tried to influence the voters in border areas, an allegation which was levelled by TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee last month. The TMC alleged the Central forces, despite the deployment of the 600 companies, "failed to provide security" to voters.

Dismissing the allegations as "baseless", the BSF claimed that violence and malpractices were rampant only in areas where polling was conducted under the "watchful eyes" of the state police.

"The allegations that the central forces and the BSF have failed to provide security cover are completely baseless. We have provided troops to the

SEC for deployment; the polling was completely peaceful wherever central forces were deployed. Even if there were few minor incidents, those were dealt with professionally," DIG, BSF (South Bengal frontier) S S Guleria told PTI.

The BSF official expressed displeasure on the border guarding force "not being provided with" details of sensitive booths.

"We have asked for the list of the sensitive booths from the SEC but were not provided with it. We learned from the media the number of sensitive booths. The local administration decided on the deployment," he said.

At least 600 companies of

central forces were deployed for the elections, along with around 70,000 state police personnel.

Reacting to the BJP's demand to implement President's Rule in the state, Ghosh said the comments are a reflection of frustration that has set in the saffron camp.

"We have heard (Leader of Opposition) Suwendu Adhikari has demanded President's Rule or implementation of Article 355 in the state. It only reflects that BJP has already accepted defeat and reflects frustration in the saffron camp," he added.

Officials said a total of 2.06 lakh candidates were in the fray for elections to 73,887 seats in the three-tier panchayat system in the state.

Dutch govt collapses over migration

AP ■ THE HAGUE

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte visited the king on Saturday to turn in the resignation of his four-party coalition and set the deeply divided Netherlands on track for a general election later this year. King Willem-Alexander flew back from a family vacation in Greece to meet with Rutte, who drove to the palace in his Saab station wagon for the meeting to explain the political crisis that toppled his administration.

Rutte declined to answer reporters' questions as he drove away from the meeting that lasted over an hour, saying the talks with the monarch were private.

The vexed issue of reining in migration that has troubled countries across Europe for years was the final stumbling block that brought down Rutte's government on Friday night, exposing the deep ideological differences between the four parties that made up the uneasy coalition.

Now it is likely to dominate campaigning for an election that is still months away.

"We are the party that can ensure a majority to significant-



ly restrict the flow of asylum seekers," said Geert Wilders, leader of the anti-immigration Party for Freedom, who supported Rutte's first minority coalition 13 years ago, but also ultimately brought it down.

Opposition parties on the left also want to make the election about tackling problems they accuse Rutte of failing to adequately address — from climate change to a chronic housing shortage and the future of the nation's multi-billion-euro (-dollar) agricultural sector.

Socialist Party leader Lilian Marijnissen told Dutch broadcaster NOS the collapse of

Rutte's government was "good news for the Netherlands. I think that everybody felt that this Cabinet was done. They have created more problems than they solved."

Despite the divisions between the four parties in Rutte's government, it will remain in power as a caretaker administration until a new coalition is formed, but will not pass major new laws.

"Given the challenges of the times, a war on this continent, nobody profits from a political crisis," tweeted Sigrid Kaag, leader of the centrist, pro-Europe D66 party.

Rutte, the Netherlands'

longest serving premier and a veteran consensus builder, appeared to be the one who was prepared to torpedo his fourth coalition government with tough demands in negotiations over how to reduce the number of migrants seeking asylum in his country.

Rutte negotiated for months over a package of measures to reduce the flow of new migrants arriving in the country of nearly 18 million people. Proposals reportedly included creating two classes of asylum — a temporary one for people fleeing conflicts and a permanent one for people trying to escape persecution — and

reducing the number of family members who are allowed to join asylum-seekers in the Netherlands. The idea of blocking family members was strongly opposed by minority coalition party ChristenUnie.

"I think unnecessary tension was introduced" to the talks, said Kaag.

Pieter Heerma, the leader of coalition partner the Christian Democrats, called Rutte's approach in the talks "almost reckless."

The fall of the government comes just months after a new, populist pro-farmer party, the Farmers Citizens Movement, known by its Dutch acronym BBB, shocked the political establishment by winning provincial elections. The party is already the largest bloc in the Dutch Senate and will be a serious threat to Rutte's People's Party for Freedom and Democracy.

The BBB's leader, Caroline van der Plas, said her party would dust off their campaign posters from the provincial vote and go again.

"The campaign has begun!" Van der Plas said in a tweet that showed her party's supporters hanging flags and banners from lamp posts.

US lawmakers, Indian-American groups condemn Indian consulate attack, seek probe

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

American lawmakers and several Indian-American community organisations have denounced the recent attack on the Indian consulate in San Francisco and called for a thorough probe into the incident so that the perpetrators are brought to justice.

While the right to protest is ingrained in the US Constitution, no one has the right to engage in violence, they said in separate statements and tweets on Friday.

They also condemned the threats issued to Indian diplomats, including India's Ambassador to the US Tarunjit Singh Sandhu, by separatist Sikhs and called on the Biden administration to ensure safety of foreign diplomats.

A video by Khalistan supporters, dated July 2 and posted on Twitter, showed the act of arson at the Indian consulate in San Francisco.

WORLD BRIEFS

DC INCLUDES SIKHISM IN SCHOOL CURRICULUM

WASHINGTON: Over 49,000 students can now learn about Sikhism in the District of Columbia after the local education board voted in favour of new social studies standards that for the first time ever includes the Sikh faith in the school curriculum. The District of Columbia has adopted new social studies standards. The new standards, voted on by the District of Columbia State Board of Education on June 21, will give approximately 49,800 students the opportunity to learn about the Sikh community. The new standards will be implemented in local schools starting from the 2024-2025 academic year. The Sikh Coalition, which worked with local education authorities on this issue, said the District of Columbia joins 17 states across the nation to include accurate information about Sikhs in their public school social studies standards.

SEVEN KILLED IN VAN GAS EXPLOSION IN PAKISTAN

LAHORE: A fire in a passenger van in eastern Pakistan on Saturday killed seven people, including two children, a government official said. The dead included four members of the same family — a woman, her daughter and her two granddaughters. Eight passengers received burn injuries of various degrees. Official Nabeel Bhatti said the incident occurred in the Sargodha district of Punjab province after a liquefied petroleum gas cylinder fitted in the vehicle leaked and exploded. The van was immediately engulfed in flames. Five passengers died at the scene, while two others succumbed to their injuries at the hospital. Three of the bodies were charred beyond recognition. Punjab Interim Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi ordered an investigation into the incident.

2 GAURDS KILLED AS MILITANTS ATTACK POLICE STN

TEHRAN: Four militants attacked a police station and killed two security forces in southeastern Iran, state TV reported on Saturday. The armed group attacked a police station in Zahedan, a city in Iran's Sistan and Baluchistan province, about 30 kilometres (18.64 miles) from the border with Pakistan, triggering a shootout. Two security forces were killed, the report said. Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard said in a statement that the four militants were killed. The report quoted Alireza Marhamati, the province's deputy governor, as saying the militants were trying to gain access to the police station and were equipped with grenades, but did not elaborate further.

GAS EXPLOSION KILLS 2 WORKERS IN GULF OF MEXICO

MEXICO CITY: An explosion and fire destroyed an offshore gas platform in the Gulf of Mexico on early Friday, while two workers died, eight were injured and one was missing, officials said. The state-owned oil company, Petroleos Mexicanos, said the disaster happened on the Nohoch gas transfer platform that it operates. It said the dead and missing workers were employed by a subcontractor and three of the injured were company employees and five worked for the subcontractor. The company, known as Pemex, said none of the injuries were life-threatening. The company's statement said seven ships evacuated a total of 321 workers from the platform. Photos distributed by the company showed several fire boats pumping streams of water onto the still-smoking platform.

US will provide cluster bombs to Ukraine

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The Biden administration will provide cluster munitions to Ukraine, national security adviser Jake Sullivan has said, vowing the US will not leave Ukraine defenceless and asserting that Kyiv has promised to use the controversial bombs carefully.

The decision comes on the eve of the NATO summit in Lithuania, where President Joe Biden is likely to face questions from allies on why the US would send a weapon into Ukraine that more than two-thirds of alliance members have banned because it has a track record for causing many civilian casualties.

And it was met with divided reactions from Congress, as some Democrats criticised the plan while some Republicans backed it.

The munitions — which are bombs that open in the air and release scores of smaller bomblets — are seen by the US as a way to get Kyiv critically needed ammunition to help bolster its offensive and push through Russian front lines. US

leaders debated the thorny issue for months, before Biden made the final decision this week.

Sullivan defended the decision on Friday, saying the US will send a version of the munition that has a reduced "dud rate", meaning fewer of the smaller bomblets fail to explode. The unexploded rounds, which often litter battlefields and populated civilian areas, cause unintended deaths. US officials have said the US will provide thousands of the rounds, but provided no specific numbers.

"We recognise the cluster munitions create a risk of civilian harm from unexploded ordnance," he told a White House briefing.

"This is why we've deferred the decision for as long as we could. But there is also a massive risk of civilian harm if Russian troops and tanks roll over Ukrainian positions and take more Ukrainian territory and subjugate more Ukrainian civilians, because Ukraine does not have enough artillery. That is intolerable to us."

Pakistan assures IMF \$8bn external payments

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Cash-strapped Pakistan has provided the IMF with a financing plan for external payments, in which it has informed the global lender that it will arrange USD 8 billion for the purpose instead of USD 6 billion, according to a media report on Saturday.

The Pakistan government and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reached a long-awaited staff-level agreement on June 29 to inject USD 3 billion Standby Arrangement (SBA) into the ailing economy after months-long negotiations that pushed the country to the brink of default.

The Executive Board of the IMF will meet on July 12 to review the SBA for Pakistan.

According to sources in the finance ministry, the IMF had asked Pakistan for assurances of USD 6 billion for external payments. The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

However, the sources added that Pakistan had given the IMF assurances of USD 8 billion for external payments. The sources said China would provide USD 3.5 billion to Pakistan of which Islamabad would keep USD 2 billion in deposits, while the commercial banks of Beijing would provide the country with USD 1.5 billion.

Besides, Saudi Arabia and the UAE will provide USD 2 billion and USD 1 billion to Pakistan, respectively.

Pakistan will also receive USD 500 million from the World Bank in addition to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank's USD 250 million.

The finance ministry offi-

cial said the USD 350 million pledged during the Geneva Conference would also come to Pakistan.

The government has set a target to raise a record-high debt-financing of Rs 11.10 trillion from domestic commercial and Shariah-compliant banks in the first three months of the current fiscal year.

The funds will primarily be used to pay off maturing old debt and partially finance the large fiscal deficit.

This marks the third consecutive month that the government has set record-high domestic borrowing targets, indicating its heavy reliance on debt to finance budgeted expenditures.

However, this approach raises concerns as the debt has reached unsustainable levels, both domestically and externally, and calls for restructuring.

To address the situation, the government needs to either reduce non-development expenditures, including cutting parliamentary budgets and curbing excessive spending or increase revenue collection.

The provisional revenue collection for the previous fiscal year stood at Rs 7.14 trillion, falling short of the set target of Rs 7.64 trillion.

After debt repayments, the largest expenditure for the government is the interest payment on the overall debt. This leaves little room for the government to carry out development projects and generate job opportunities.

According to the Bank of America Securities, Pakistan is facing an acute liquidity crisis in debt management, which directly undermines its overall financial stability.

Zelenskyy praises soldiers to mark 500 days of war

AP ■ KYIV

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy marked the 500th day of the war Saturday by hailing the country's soldiers in a video from a Black Sea island that became the symbol of Ukraine's resilience in the face of the Russian invasion.

Speaking from Snake Island, Zelenskyy honored the Ukrainian soldiers who fought for the island and all other defenders of the country, saying that reclaiming control of the island "is a great proof that Ukraine will regain every bit of its territory."

"I want to thank — from here, from this place of victory — each of our soldiers for these 500 days," Zelenskyy said. "Thank you to everyone who fights for Ukraine!"

It was unclear when the video was filmed. Zelenskyy was in Turkey on Saturday.

Russian forces took control of the tiny stone island on February 24, 2022, the day Moscow launched its invasion, in the apparent hope of using it as a staging ground for an assault on Odesa, Ukraine's biggest port and the headquarters of its navy.

The island took on legendary significance for Ukraine's resistance to the Russian invasion, when Ukrainian troops there reportedly received a demand from a Russian warship to surrender or be bombed. The answer supposedly came back, "Go (expletive) yourself!"

The islands Ukrainian defenders were captured by the Russians but later freed as part of a prisoner exchange.

After the island was taken, the Ukrainian military heavily bombarded the small Russian garrison there, forcing

Erdogan: Ukraine deserves membership in NATO

Istanbul (AP): Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed support early on Saturday for Ukraine joining NATO, saying the war-torn country deserves to join the alliance.

Erdogan made the comment at a joint news conference with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who arrived in Turkey as part of a European tour to rally support for Ukraine's entry into the military alliance after the war with Russia comes to an end.

NATO leaders meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania, next week are expected to reaffirm that Ukraine will join their alliance one day.

"There is no doubt that Ukraine deserves NATO membership," Erdogan told reporters.

His support for Ukraine comes as Turkey has been holding off giving its final approval to Sweden joining NATO, saying Stockholm is not effectively cracking down on Kurdish militants and other groups that Ankara views as threats to its security.

Sweden, along with Finland, abandoned its decades-long neutrality and applied to join NATO following Russia's invasion of

the Russians to pull back on June 30, 2022. The Russian retreat reduced the threat of a seaborne Russian attack on Odesa and helped pave the way for a deal to resume Ukrainian grain exports.

"Let the freedom that all our heroes of different times



Ukraine last year. Turkey's parliament ratified Finland's membership earlier this year, after Ankara voiced satisfaction with its efforts to address Turkey's security concerns.

Erdogan also said Turkey was working toward extending a Turkish and UN-brokered grain deal that has paved the way for the shipment of more than 30 million tons of Ukrainian grain through the Black Sea.

The deal, which helped temper rising global food prices, is set to expire July 17. Russia has been reluctant to extend the deal, citing obstacles to its own exports of food and fertiliser.

"We are continuing our work on the grain corridor wanted for Ukraine and that must be won right now be a tribute to all those who gave their lives for Ukraine," Zelenskyy said. "We will definitely win!"

Intense battles continued to rage on Saturday in the country's east and south as

issue. We are working to see how long we can extend it after July 17," Erdogan said.

Zelenskyy accused Russia of obstructing the movement of ships.

"Russia behaves as if it owns the entire Black Sea, as if it is the owner here," said Zelenskyy, making his first trip to Turkey since Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Erdogan said Russian President Vladimir Putin would visit Turkey in August, when he hoped to discuss renewal of the Black Sea grain deal as well as a possible prisoner swap. Turkey has maintained close ties with both Ukraine and Russia, using its relations to both to act as a mediator.

Ukrainian forces pressed their attacks against multi-layered Russian defences in the initial stages of their counteroffensive.

Ukraine's interior ministry said that a Russian rocket strike on the town of Lyman killed eight civilians and wounded 13 others early Saturday.

China sends warships, fighter jets near Taiwan during Yellen's visit

AP ■ BEIJING

China's People's Liberation Army sent 13 aircraft and 6 vessels into airspace and waters around Taiwan over the past 24 hours as of early on Saturday, overlapping with United States Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen's visit to Beijing aimed at mending strained relations.

Taiwan's Defence Ministry said it is monitoring the situation from the air and sea, and land-based missile systems were prepared to respond. It said four Chinese aircraft —

two SU-30 fighters, one BZK-005 reconnaissance plane and one Y-8 anti-submarine warfare plane — crossed the median line in the Taiwan Strait that serves as a de-facto border between the sides, and had entered Taiwan's southwestern air defence identification zone.

China claims Taiwan as its own territory to be annexed by force if necessary and sends air and naval missions on virtually a daily basis in an attempt to wear down the island's defense capabilities and intimidate its 23 million people, who thus far seem largely unfazed by such



moves. US support for the self-governing island republic that split from mainland China amid civil war in 1949 remains a major irritant in relations with Beijing.

Shortly before Yellen's arrival, Chinese President Xi

Jinping visited the headquarters of the People's Liberation Army's Eastern Theater on Thursday. Its area of operations directly faces the island across the Taiwan Strait.

Addressing commanders at the Jiangsu province headquarters, Xi "stressed efforts to... break new ground for theater command development and war preparedness," state media reported.

He called for "enhancing the planning of war and combat... and stepping up training under real combat conditions to raise the forces' capa-

bilities to fight and win," the reports said.

The PLA, the world's largest standing armed force, serves as the military wing of the Communist Party and is overseen by a committee headed by Xi.

Beijing also objects vigorously to United States military support for Taiwan, and lashed out Wednesday at an upcoming USD 440 million sale of cannon shells and other equipment, accusing the US of turning Taiwan into a powder keg.

Yellen is not expected to meet with Xi during her visit.

Scotland wants to decriminalise drugs

London (AP): The Scottish government has proposed decriminalising possession of all drugs for personal use to tackle one of Europe's highest overdose death rates.

The suggestion was almost instantly blocked by the Conservative UK government in London, which said it had "no plans" to soften drug laws.

The semi-autonomous Edinburgh government, led by the pro-independence Scottish National Party, said on Friday that removing criminal penalties for drug possession would "allow for the provision of safe,

evidence-based harm reduction services". Scotland's death rate from drug overdoses is three times the rate in the UK as a whole and the highest in Western Europe. Last year there were almost 1,100 drug-related deaths in Scotland, which has a population of 5.5 million, according to government figures. "The war on drugs has failed," Scottish drugs minister Elena Whitham said at a news conference alongside former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark and ex-Swiss President Ruth Dreifuss, both advocates of drug law reform.

"Our current drug law does not stop people from using drugs, it does not stop people from experiencing the harm associated and, critically, it does not stop people from dying," Whitham said. The Scottish government said decriminalisation would free "individuals from the fear of accessing treatment and support, reducing drug-related harms and, ultimately, improving lives." It cited the example of Portugal, which ditched criminal penalties for drug possession more than two decades ago and focused on treatment.

US military destroys last of its declared chemical weapons arsenal

AP ■ RICHMOND

The last of the United States' declared chemical weapons stockpile was destroyed at a sprawling military installation in eastern Kentucky, Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell has announced, a milestone that closes a chapter of warfare dating back to World War I.

Workers at the Blue Grass Army Depot in Kentucky destroyed rockets filled with GB nerve agent, completing a decades-long campaign to eliminate a stockpile that by the

end of the Cold War totalled more than 30,000 tonnes.

"Chemical weapons are responsible for some of the most horrific episodes of human loss," McConnell said in a statement on Friday. "Though the use of these deadly agents will always be a stain on history, today our nation has finally fulfilled our promise to rid our arsenal of this evil."

The weapons' destruction is a major watershed for Richmond, Kentucky and Pueblo, Colorado, where an Army depot destroyed the last of its chemical agents last

month. It's also a defining moment for arms control efforts worldwide.

The US faced a September 30 deadline to eliminate its remaining chemical weapons under the international Chemical Weapons Convention, which took effect in 1997 and was joined by 193 countries. The munitions being destroyed in Kentucky are the last of 51,000 M55 rockets with GB nerve agent — a deadly toxin also known as sarin — that have been stored at the depot since the 1940s.

By destroying the muni-

tions, the US is officially underscoring that these types of weapons are no longer acceptable in the battlefield and sending a message to the handful of countries that haven't joined the agreement, military experts say.

Chemical weapons were first used in modern warfare in World War I, where they were estimated have killed at least 1,00,000. Despite their use being subsequently banned by the Geneva Convention, countries continued to stockpile the weapons until the treaty calling for their destruction.

In southern Colorado, workers at the Army Pueblo Chemical Depot started destroying the weapons in 2016, and on June 22 completed their mission of neutralising an entire cache of about 2,600 tonnes of mustard blister agent. The projectiles and mortars comprised about 8.5 per cent of the country's original chemical weapons stockpile of 30,610 tonnes of agent.

Nearly 8,00,000 chemical munitions containing mustard agent were stored since the 1950s inside row after row of heavily guarded concrete and

earthen bunkers that pock the landscape near a large swath of farmland east of Pueblo.

The weapons' destruction alleviates a concern that civic leaders in Colorado and Kentucky admit was always in the back of their minds.

"Those (weapons) sitting out there were not a threat," Pueblo Mayor Nick Gradisar said. But, he added, "you always wondered what might happen with them."

In the 1980s, the community around Kentucky's Blue Grass Army Depot rose up in opposition to the Army's initial

plan to incinerate the plant's 520 tonnes of chemical weapons, leading to a decades-long battle over how they would be disposed of. They were able to halt the planned incineration plant, and then, with help from lawmakers, prompted the Army to submit alternative methods to burning the weapons.

Craig Williams, who became the leading voice of the community opposition and later a partner with political leadership and the military, said residents were concerned about potential toxic pollu-

tion from burning the deadly chemical agents.

Williams noted that the military eliminated most of its existing stockpile by burning weapons at other, more remote sites such as Johnston Atoll in the Pacific Ocean or at a chemical depot in the middle of the Utah desert. But the Kentucky site was adjacent to Richmond and only a few dozen miles away from Lexington, the state's second-largest city.

"We had a middle school of over 600 kids a mile away from the (planned) smoke-stack," Williams said.

Payments will be withheld for illegal dumping: NHAI

Contractors to submit no-dumping certificate

PTI ■ SHIMLA

Contractors found indulging in illegal dumping would not only face penalties but their bill payments will also be withheld, said Regional Officer of National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) in Himachal Pradesh Abdul Basit on Saturday.

Presiding over the meeting of all the contractors, team leaders of supervising consultants and project directors of NHAI Mandi, Shimla, Palampur and Hamirpur, he gave a stern warning to contractors that no illegal dumping would be tolerated under any circumstances, a statement issued here said.

The Regional Officer directed to include no dumping certificate in the monthly progress report on the suggestion of Project Directors that contractors should provide a certificate that no illegal dumping or environmental damage has occurred, duly verified by the Team Leader in the Monthly Progress Report (MPR).



He said that henceforth, every MPR should include a column where the Team Leader and the Project Manager of the contractor would sign a certificate affirming no illegal dumping has taken place and no environmental damage has been caused. Contractors found indulging in illegal dumping would not only face penalties but their bill payments will also be withheld, he said and directed to remove all dumped material from dumping sites within seven days.

He also instructed that all contractors should contribute to environmental conserva-

tion by undertaking additional tree plantation and establishing additional rainwater harvesting systems.

Furthermore, it was mandated that all supervisors, truck drivers, and other staff members receive training on environmental protection and prevention of illegal dumping to ensure compliance and take necessary measures for environmental conservation.

A large number of slides are taking place during the ongoing monsoon season and slides have been witnessed near stretches where four laning works were going on or have been completed.

Railways to launch spl trains connecting heritage sites: Vaishnaw

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Saturday unveiled a special train that would be run on Heritage routes across the country.

The Minister after inspecting a train modified as a steam loco train at the MGR Central Railway Station here said more such trains would be introduced on heritage routes in the coming months.

Elaborating on the concept, Vaishnaw said the Railways had planned to introduce a new concept -- 'Heritage special' which would be built using 'steam engines' as the theme.

"The steam engine as we all know, is very emotionally connected to us and even though it is not running today, we thought we can create a new concept that looks like a steam engine but actually operates by electricity," he told reporters.

The Minister, who began his speech in Tamil, said the special concept was presented to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and he (the PM) believes in the concept which is 'virasat bhi, vikas bhi' which means 'heritage' and 'development'



should go together.

"This new concept has been created as heritage special, I thank the very good technical officers, staff and Golden Rock Railway Workshop, Tiruchirappalli, Perambur, and Avadi who have all contributed in creating this concept," he said.

To a query, he said the special train would be first tested on long heritage routes and later it would be open for tourists in two-three months.

"We will first try this and then manufacture more of this. In another two or three months, it should get into public use. Basically, our testing on the ground is complete, we received the safety certificate for it. We will be running it on longer routes and then take it into regular commercial operation," he said.

Mandaviya stresses on reduction in chemical fertilisers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Saturday said the excessive use of chemical fertilisers affects soil fertility and also has side effects on human and animal health, and stressed on the need to promote alternative fertilisers such as nano liquid urea-DAP.

The chemical and fertiliser minister was addressing a "Stakeholder workshop on strategy for promotion of alternative nutrition to reduce dependence on chemical fertilizers for Soil health and sustainability" here.

The workshop was attended by vice chancellors of agricultural universities, state agriculture officers, manufacturers and distributors, farmer groups and NGOs, besides senior officials from the ministry of agriculture, ministry of chemicals and fertilizers, and Niti Aayog. "The side effects of over consumption of chemical fertilisers are visible now. Soil health has been impacted," Mandaviya said, adding that the growth in production and productivity has stagnated.

Citing a medical study in few districts where usage of chemical fertilisers are high, the



minister said it was found that there are negative impacts on health of human as well as animals. Mandaviya highlighted that the government has recently approved a new scheme PM-PRANAM (PM Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Generation, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother Earth) to incentivise states to promote alternative fertilisers and reduce the use of chemical fertilisers.

It has also decided to introduce sulphur-coated urea (Urea Gold) in the country for the first time to address sulphur deficiency in the soil.

That apart, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved an

outlay of Rs 1,451 crore subsidy to promote organic manure.

Mandaviya emphasised that all stakeholders and the government should work together to offset the negative impact of chemical fertilisers on agriculture.

He stressed on the need to create awareness among farmers about the negative impact of chemical fertilisers.

The minister spoke about the need to promote alternative fertilisers like nano liquid urea and nano liquid Di-ammonium phosphate (DAP), organic farming and natural farming.

Mandaviya said there are no negative impact of nano-fertilisers and farmers will not adopt if it does not help in boosting production.

Nepal, India to finalise report of Pancheshwar Multipurpose power plant

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal and India have agreed to hold a meeting of experts to "iron out the differences" and finalise the detailed project report of the much-awaited 6,480 megawatt Pancheshwar Multipurpose bi-national power plant to be developed on the bordering Mahakali river, according to a media report on Saturday.

The understanding was reached during a meeting of the governing council of the Pancheshwar Development Authority held in Pokhara in Nepal on Thursday and Friday, The Kathmandu Post newspaper reported.

"The meeting decided to extend the term of the team of experts which expired in March," the report quoted Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation ministry spokesperson Madhu Bhetuwal as saying. "The two sides also agreed to hold the next meeting of the team of experts within 10 days to iron out the differences over the DPR (detailed project report) and make a move towards concluding the DPR," he said.



Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project (PMP) is a bi-national hydropower project to be developed on the Mahakali River bordering Nepal and India. The development of the project is covered under the integrated Mahakali Treaty signed between Nepal and India in 1996 under which equal sizes of underground powerhouses of 3,240 MW will be constructed on each side of the Mahakali river in India and Nepal.

Apart from generating electricity, the project will provide irrigation to 130,000

hectares of land in Nepal and 240,000 hectares in India in addition to other incidental benefits including flood protection.

However, a mutually acceptable DPR of the Pancheshwar Project could not be finalised due to differences on certain contentious issues.

"There were more than 500 unresolved issues which have now come down to 127," said Bhetuwal, who is also a joint secretary at the energy ministry of Nepal.

The upcoming meeting of

the experts, the date of which is yet to be finalised, is the first move towards concluding the DPR after the prime ministers of both countries last month agreed to conclude the DPR within three months during Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda's India visit from May 31 to June 3, the report said.

During Prachanda's visit to India, it was agreed that officials of both governments would expedite bilateral discussions towards early finalisation of the Pancheshwar DPR within three months.

Isha Ambani appointed director on RIL's financial services unit

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's daughter Isha and former CAG Rajiv Mehrishi are among the directors appointed on the board of demerged financial services unit of Reliance Industries Ltd, the company said on Saturday.

Reliance had previously announced plans to demerge its financial services undertaking into Reliance Strategic Investments Limited (RSIL) and rename and list it as Jio Financial Services Limited (JFSL). It will lend to consumers and merchants based on proprietary data analytics and will eventually branch out to insurance, payments, digital broking and asset management.

Every Reliance shareholder will get one share of the new firm for every share held in the parent.

While the effective date

of the demerger has been fixed as July 1, July 20 has been fixed as the record day for allocating shares of the new company, according to the company's stock exchange filing.

The spinoff, which will create fifth-largest financier in terms of capital and compete directly with the likes of Paytm and Bajaj Finance, will complement Reliance's consumer businesses, which include India's largest wireless operator with about 428 million users, top retail chain with over 17,000 stores.

RRTS depot in Ghaziabad gets its own solar power plant

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) depot in Duhai, Ghaziabad will be powered by solar energy with the inauguration of a solar power plant, officials of the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) said on Saturday.

The plant has an installed capacity of 585 kilowatt-peak (kWp), where solar panels have been installed at several depot buildings including on the workshop, they said.

As per the NCRTC, the solar plant, during its estimated lifespan of 25 years, is projected to generate approximately 6,66,000 units of solar energy per year.

The plant is expected to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 615 tonnes annually, contributing to a reduction of 15,375 tonnes of emissions over its lifetime.

"The solar energy produced through the solar plant will be monitored and optimised by a cutting-edge cloud-based application which will track the output on a regular



basis. This advanced technology ensures transparency, efficiency, and seamless management of the solar energy infrastructure," NCRTC said.

Solar power generated by this plant will not only meet the energy requirements of the depot in its entirety but will also have surplus to use in other RRTS operations, the officials said.

The solar plant positions the Duhai depot as a 'green depot'.

NCRTC had adopted a solar policy in March 2021 and as per the policy, it will increase the share of renewable energy by generating about 11 MW peak in-house solar power on the rooftop of stations, depots and other buildings for non-traction purposes, in the next five years.

Farmers hopeful of better paddy yield on good monsoon rains

PTI ■ JAMMU

The paddy cultivation has started gaining momentum over the past week across the Jammu division with farmers expressing satisfaction over the good amount of rainfall under the influence of Monsoon winds and western disturbance over the region.

The farmers are hopeful for better yield this year compared to the previous years.

The cultivation of paddy, especially the world-famous Basmati rice, serves as the sole source of income to a majority of farmers in RS Pura, Marh and parts of Samba and Kathua districts in Jammu region.

"Paddy and maize are main crops of the Jammu region which are dependent on rain water... We had good pre-monsoon rains. The Monsoon has also set on time which is good," Joint Director, Agriculture Department, A S Reen told PTI.

He said the sowing of maize that is mostly cultivated in the rain-fed hilly areas was completed sometime back and the frequent rains over the past week are a blessing for the crop.

The rice cultivation in Jammu plains and some parts of hilly areas is in progress. "Watering of fields from canals and tube wells is insufficient and the rainfall is quite essential for the crop, especially Basmati Rice which needs a lot of water for irrigation."

The Basmati crop takes 160-170 days to reach the harvesting stage and needs a lot of



water at crucial stages for a successful crop. Reen said the paddy production of Jammu is around four lakh quintals, while two lakh quintals of rice are procured through Food Corporation of India to meet the local demand.

Maize production is around four lakh quintals and the department facilitates the farmers to sell their surplus produce.

He said the production of paddy and maize can go up by 25 to 30 per cent, depending on various factors including best quality seed, proper fertilization and rain water.

"The department is playing its part to ensure availability of best quality seed and fertilizers to the farmers," he said, requesting the farmers to go for crop insurance to avoid losses in case of any calamity.

"Rains are beneficial for the growth of the paddy. The success of the crop depends on water availability during the next one month and if we had a good monsoon, we are hopeful of a good yield this time," Darshan Kumar, a farmer from Marh block in the outskirts of

Jammu city told PTI.

He said the agriculture department employees are working in close coordination with the farmers to educate them about the newly introduced government schemes.

Thakur Dass said rains have brought relief as earlier there was a shortage of water, also affecting the wheat crop.

The agriculture department last week celebrated crop insurance week to launch a mass awareness campaign for maximum enrolment of the farmers under the scheme for Kharif-2023.

Director Agriculture, Jammu K K Sharma said the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna (PMFBY) will go a long way in mitigating the financial risk of the farmers suffering from the crop losses and aid in stabilizing their income.

Highlighting the achievements under the scheme, Sharma said till date one lakh farmers in Jammu division have benefited from PMFBY with the disbursement of an amount to the tune of Rs 96 crore as settlement of claims to these beneficiaries.

Adani buys 30% in Trainman for ₹3.5 cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Adani Enterprises, the flagship firm of billionaire Gautam Adani's group, has bought a close to 30 per cent stake in Start Enterprises Pvt Ltd, which owns the online train ticket booking platform Trainman.

Adani Enterprises last month announced that it has signed a pact to acquire 100 per cent of SEPL.

In a stock exchange filing on Saturday, Adani Enterprises said Adani Digital Labs Pvt Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the company, has bought a 29.81 per cent stake in SEPL for Rs 3.56 crore.

SEPL had a turnover of Rs 4.51 crore in 2022-23 (April 2022 to March 2023) fiscal year.

While last month, Adani Enterprises had described SEPL as "an online train booking and information platform," on Saturday it described the firm as one into "e-commerce and website development."

The announcement last month had led to a mini-controversy with Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh seeking to suggest that Adani's takeover of Trainman may eventually result in the takeover of IRCTC - the Indian Railways' ticketing and other services arm.

IRCTC had issued a statement to deny the allegation. Explaining the e-ticketing business segment, IRCTC had said that around 14.5 lakh



reserved tickets are booked on a daily basis in Indian Railways. Out of these almost 81 per cent are e-tickets and booked through IRCTC itself. Hence, there is no competition between IRCTC and its agents, including Trainman.

Trainman, being a B2C partner of IRCTC contributes 0.13 per cent of total reserved ticketing, he had said adding since these firms are integrated with IRCTC, overall, they help the customers in a smooth ticketing process.

Founded in 2011 by Vineet Chirania and Karan Kumar, Trainman is an Indian travel booking app that enables passengers to check the PNR (Passenger Name Record) status, predicts the possibility of getting a confirmed seat in case of a waitlist, and also provides real-time updates on seat availability, running status, time table, coach position, fare calculator, etc.

Trainman is Adani group's second investment in the travel booking and information segment. In October 2021, Adani Enterprises bought a minority stake in Flipkart's Cleartrip Pvt Ltd, an online travel aggregator.

De Beers, Botswana sign diamond sales, new lease agreements

PTI ■ MUMBAI



Diamond mining giant De Beers has signed a 10-year sales pact and a 25-year new lease agreement with Botswana that will have natural rough supply coming through the pipeline for the next 30 years.

In the sales agreement, De Beers increased the shares of Botswana to 50 per cent. It was 30 per cent at the beginning which later increased to 40 per cent.

"Last week, at the end of June, we agreed in principle a 10-year sales agreement and a 25-year new lease agreement for the assets commencing 2029, with the Botswana government," De Beers Executive Vice President Paul Rowley told PTI.

The new mining licence, new lease agreement with Desbswana for 25 years secures natural rough supply coming through the pipeline for the

next 30 years, he added.

Debswana is a mining company, which is an equal partnership between the Republic of Botswana (GRB) and the De Beers Group of companies.

On the sale agreement, Rowley said, "From 25-30 per cent in the first year of signing, we went for about 40 per cent and then we moved to 50 per cent for 10 years with Debswana production."

The company is also exploring other sites in Botswana and in countries like Angola, Canada and South Africa for mining opportunities, he said.

"We are looking both in Botswana, South Africa and Angola, Canada. Most recently we have reentered into Angola, which I think is pretty much recognised as one of the diamond producing countries and for diamond exploration at this moment," he added.

Vaishnaw addresses 19th Convocation at SRMIST

PNS ■ KATTANKULATHUR



SRM Institute of Science and Technology is all set to get a 5G Laboratory and students could devise solutions for various problems affecting the world through their innovative ideas, Ashwini Vaishnaw, Union Minister for Railways, Communications, and Information and Technology, said on Saturday.

Delivering his address at the 19th Convocation of SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattankulathur, the Minister said today's youth were entering a world full of exciting opportunities. He said venture capitalists, the Central Government encouraging a Startup culture and ecosystem, and institutions like SRM were creating opportunities for young people.

Stating that 5G services were launched in India in October last year, the Minister said there was overwhelming growth in its application and use. India had overtaken several countries where 5G services were launched earlier. In USA, there were only 1 lakh 5G radiating ports, while the number was 2.75 lakh in India, making the country, the 2nd largest 5G ecosystem in the world.

Rajiv, Goud steal show in national racing

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Rajiv Sethu of RACR Castrol Power1 Ultimate team stamped his authority on the two premium Pro-Stock categories, 301-400cc and 165cc, as he won races in the second round of the MRF MMSC FMSCI National Motorcycle Racing Championship 2023 at the Madras International Circuit, here on Saturday.

Earlier, Hyderabad's Vignesh Goud continued his winning run by topping the Novice (Stock 165cc) race, his third after a double in the first round at Coimbatore last month, while former champion Anne Jennifer qualified for pole position in the Girls (Stock 165cc) category.

Sethu, who was struggling to get his racing career back on track after a couple of disappointing seasons, continued his dramatic turnaround this year following a double in the Pro-Stock 301-400cc category in



Coimbatore last month. He followed up with another win here today after surviving a huge highside scare before ending the day with a grand victory in the Pre-Stock 165cc class.

He got off to a fine start from pole position and showed strong pace to open a small lead in the

very first of the six-lap outing. In the next lap, he survived a massive moment as he saved a highside crash but slipped to second spot behind TVS Petronas Racing's Deepak Ravikumar. Sethu then used his pace to regain the lead and never looked back for a commanding win, his

third of the season.

Finishing third behind Ravikumar was another Petronas TVS Racing rider, K Y Ahamed who gained the podium spot when teammate Sarthak Chavan crashed midway through the race. In the Pro-Stock 165cc race, it was 16-year-old Bengalurean

Chiranth Vishwanath (Petronas TVS Racing) who caused a huge buzz by qualifying for pole position in a highly-experienced quality grid in the morning ahead of Sethu. Later in the day, Chiranth, in his debut season at this level, even led the race for a while before crashing after making contact with another rider. By then, Sethu had slipped past for the lead.

While Chiranth dropped down the grid, the Pacer Yamaha pair of Mathana Kumar and Prabhu Arunagiri made ground to finish in that order behind Sethu.

Earlier, starting from pole position, Vignesh Goud (Raceists Motorcycle Club) fought off close attention in the early part of the six-lap race boasting of a 24-bike grid, before pulling out with a decisive lead which he sustained to the finish with Abdul Basim (Rockers Racing) coming in second from a P6 start and Chengalpet's

Sangeeth Sundar third.

Idemitsu Honda India Talent Cup (NSF 250): In the day's last race, Chennai's Kavin Samaar Quintal extended his dominance in this category with his third consecutive win of the season and in a commanding fashion. He followed up with his double in the first round last month with another easy win today, ahead of Bengaluru's A S James and Prakash Kumar Kamat.

Petronas TVS One-Make Championship: In the Girls (RTR 200) category, Bengaluru's Nithila Das scored her second win of the season after holding off local challenger Nadine Faith Balaji while Mumbai's Sarah Khan finished third. Later, another Bengalurean, Shreyas Hareesh yet again topped the Rookie race that was red-flagged and cut to four laps instead of the scheduled six following a couple of on-track incidents, for his third win on the trot this season.



Pranavi best Indian at 24th as amateur Shannon wins Singapore Ladies golf

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Pranavi Urs was the top Indian at T-24 even as local amateur Shannon Tan won the inaugural USD 100,000 Trust Singapore Ladies Masters pro event here on Saturday.

Pranavi shot 71 in the final round and was 2-over 218 for three days.

The other Indian who made the cut, amateur Avani Prashanth (73) was T-41. Seher Atwal missed the cut at the event, which is part of the China LPGA Tour.

Shannon, playing in the third last group, closed with a birdie on her final hole for a 66 to lead at 10-under.

She shot 6-under 66 with four birdies on the back, including three in a row from 11th to the 13th, and then had a final 15-foot birdie for victory on the 18th. She shot 68-72-66.

Playing one group behind Shannon, Chinese rookie Ji Yuai (67) led after 16 holes but faltered with a bogey on the 17th. She failed to birdie the last to force a play-off and ended second at 9-under and one short.

Thai Sherman Santiwitthanaphong (68-

72-70) was third at 6-under 210.

Pranavi, who had a rough first round 75, finished with a 72-71. Her final round included five birdies and four bogeys, three of which came in the middle of the round between the sixth and the ninth.

Pranavi, who now plays on the Epon and Ladies European Tours, finished Tied-24th at 2-over 218.

"This week I wasn't the best in terms of how I was feeling physically, but I'm glad my coach was on the bag this week and we could work on the game a little bit," Pranavi said.

"Overall, my game feels pretty good as I have been playing well over the last few weeks, getting my form back after not the best starts on the Epon Tour."

Indian amateur Avani Prashanth, a special invitee to the pro event, carded 73 after first two rounds of 73-76 to finish at 6-over 222 and was Tied-41st.

The 19-year-old Shannon, a first-year student at Texas Tech University, had earlier this season played with Rose Zhang, who won her first pro event on the LPGA Tour after being World No. 1 amateur for a long time.



Shot putter Karanveer fails dope test, out of Asian Championships

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shot putter Karanveer Singh has failed an out-of-competition dope test conducted recently and he will be pulled out of the Indian team for the Asian Athletics Championships in Bangkok next week.

Karanveer, who trains at the National Institute of Sports (NIS) in Patiala, was earlier named in a 54-member Indian team for the July 12-16 continental championships. The Indian team will leave for Thailand on Saturday night.

"Yes, that is correct," Athletics Federation of India (AFI) president Adille Sumariwalla told PTI on Saturday when asked if Karanveer had failed a dope test.

The exact date of the banned

substance are not known.

Earlier in the day, an Indian team source had said that Karanveer could be left out of the side leaving for Thailand from New Delhi and Bengaluru.

The 25-year-old Karanveer had won a bronze in the Federation Cup in May with a throw of 19.05m while he was second behind Asian record holder Tajinderpal Singh Toor in the National Inter-State Championships in June with an effort of 19.78m. He is currently sixth among Asians in the season's top list.

He has a personal best of 20.10m, achieved during the National Open Championships last year.

Toor will now be the lone Indian in the men's shot put event in the Asian Championships.

36-member aquatics squad for Asian Games announced

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A 36-member aquatics squad including former bronze medallist Virbhawal Khade will represent India at the upcoming Asian Games in Hangzhou in September-October.

The Swimming Federation of India (SFI) on Saturday announced the squad which includes 21 in swimming, three in diving and 13 members in waterpolo.

The 12-member men's swimming squad includes the star duo of Sajan Prakash and Srihari Nataraj along with veteran Khade, who won a 50m butterfly bronze at the Guangzhou 2010 edition.

Teenagers Aneesh Gowda and Aryan Nehra who broke four records and were adjudged the best swimmers in the Senior Nationals this year were also picked in the squad.

India squad: Swimming, Men: Aneesh Gowda, Advait Page, Aryan Nehra, Anand A S, Kushagra Rawat, Likith S P, Sajan Prakash, Srihari Nataraj, Tanish George Mathew, Utkarsh Patil, Vishal Grewal and Virbhawal Khade.

Women: Anannya Nayak, Dimidhi Desinghu, Hashika Ramchandran, Linyesh A K, Maana Patel, Nina Venkatesh, Palak Joshi, Shiwangi Sarma and Vritti Agarwal.

Diving, Men: Siddharth Bajrang Pardeshi, Heman London Singh.

Skeet shooters to take aim first at Lonato Shotgun World Cup

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's skeet shooters will start the country's campaign in the ISSF Shotgun World Cup in Lonato, Italy, beginning July 10.

The pre-event training will be held on Sunday.

India's six-member skeet shooting team comprises Olympian Mairaj Ahmad Khan, Anantjeet Singh Naruka and Gurjoat Khangura in the men's section, while Ganemat Sekhon, Darshna Rathore and Maheshwari Chauhan will take aim in the women's com-

petition.

For the likes of Anantjeet, Gurjoat, Ganemat and Darshna, this will be vital practice before the crucial World Championships in August in Baku, Azerbaijan, where as many as four Paris 2024 Olympics quota places will be available in each event.

These four shooters are also part of the squad of the Hangzhou Asian Games squad to be held from September 23 to October 8.

Six more members will also be taking part in the trap competitions which begins on next Saturday, after the con-

clusion of the skeet events.

While trap has opened its Paris quota account after Bhowneesh Mendiratta finished fourth at the World Championships last year, the Indian skeet shooters are yet to win a quota place and will be looking forward to the Lonato World Cup to iron out any shortcomings and assess themselves against a world-class field.

The skeet squad has already arrived in Lonato and started unofficial training at the Concaverde Shooting Range, the tournament venue.

Mumbai City FC sign two talents from RFYC

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai City FC on Saturday announced the signing of Nathan Rodrigues and Franklin Nazareth, two talented youngsters from Reliance Foundation Young Champs.

The two 19-year-old players join the Islanders on four-year contracts until May 2027.

Hailing from Goa, Nathan started his journey in the Churchill Brothers' youth system and was scouted by RFYC in 2019.

Once a midfielder at Churchill, Nathan later transitioned into playing in defence with the help of his coaches here.

A tall, left-footed defender who is comfortable on the ball, Nathan is an asset with his positive distribution, providing an outlet to build up from the back.

Franklin came through the ranks of his hometown team, FC Pune City,



before being scouted by RFYC in 2019 after playing in the RFYS National School Championship.

Franklin is a strong defensive mid-

fielder with good positioning and passing range. He possesses the ability to receive the ball in different situations and progress it, while also having the

propensity to intercept passes and break up opposition attacks.

Nathan and Franklin were instrumental for RFYC in in the Reliance Foundation Development League in the 2022 and 2023 seasons. The duo played a crucial role in the Young Champs' fourth-placed finish in the 2023 edition and in their subsequent maiden appearance at the Premier League Next Gen Cup.

Des Buckingham, head coach, Mumbai City FC, said: "Nathan and Franklin are two exceptional talents. We are glad we were able to secure their signature ahead of the new season, which will allow us to help them make the transition to senior football."

"I am sure both Nathan and Franklin will be able to adapt to our group and our culture with ease. Their signing also reaffirms our commitment to working and developing with the best young talents in the country."

Belgian tennis great Henin receives ITF's highest honor

AP ■ LONDON

The International Tennis Federation has awarded Justine Henin its highest honor, the Philippe Chatrier Award.

Henin won seven Grand Slam singles titles, an Olympic gold medal, and was part of Belgium's team that won the Fed Cup - now called the Billie Jean King Cup - in 2001.

The award, named after the former ITF president, was introduced in 1996 and recognizes people who have made significant contributions to the sport on and off the court.

"She was one of the best players of her generation on the court and since retirement has made a significant and ongoing contribution to our sport at all levels," ITF president David Haggerty said Saturday.

The 41-year-old Henin has established a successful academy in Belgium and a charitable foundation that helps provide sporting opportunities for children with disabilities.

The award will be presented Saturday at the ITF World Champions Awards at London's Victoria and Albert Museum.

"I always gave my very best throughout my career and achieved a lot of success," Henin said. "I have worked very hard since retirement to give back to the sport that I love, and I will continue to do so. Tennis is a unique and brilliant sport that provides benefits for people's physical and mental health."

Gandas misses cut in Denmark, Elvira takes lead

PTI ■ FORSO (DENMARK)

India's Manu Gandas missed yet another cut as he shot a second straight two-over 72 in Made in Himmerland golf tournament on the DP World Tour here.

With four bogeys against two birdies, it was a disappointing week for rookie Gandas, who has now missed 10 cuts in 15 starts after getting a DP World Tour card on the strength of being the topper on the PGTI Indian Tour.

Gandas bogeyed third, eighth and the 11th holes before picking birdies on 14th and 15th but soon after dropped



another shot on 16th. He finished Tied-91st.

Spaniard Nacho Elvira reeled off five consecutive birdies on his way to an eight-under 62 to seize the lead at the halfway stage.

He had opened with a one-under 69 in testing conditions but moved to nine under and into the lead on day two, mainly thanks to a fine front nine.

He started with a birdie on the par four first before a par at the second was followed by gains at the next five holes and he turned in 29.

The 36-year-old gave a shot back at the par five 11th, one of the hardest holes on the course, but bounced back with birdies at the 12th, 14th and 17th to move one clear of first round leader Robert MacIntyre, who is now second on eight under thanks to a two under 68.

Arjun misses cut at John Deere Classic

PTI ■ SILVIS

Indian golfer Arjun Atwal stumbled on the back nine, carding a disappointing six-over 77 to miss the cut in the John Deere Classic on the PGA TOUR here.

Atwal, who straddles between the main PGA TOUR and the PGA Tour Champions (for Seniors) shot even par 71 on the first day. But, the Indian had a tough back nine on day two with two double bogeys and two other bogeys.

He totalled six-over and the cut fell at four-under.

Cameron Young, who has six runner-up finishes on the Tour, shot a seven-under 64 on Friday to take a two-stroke lead halfway through the John Deere Classic.

Young was at 13-under 129 at TPC Deere Run, with Garrick Higgo (66), Adam Schenk (66) and Brendon Todd (65) chasing him at 11-under.

The 26-year-old Young was the PGA TOUR's Rookie of the Year and he was also the runner-up at The Open Championship and tied for third at the PGA Championship and played on

the winning U.S. Presidents Cup team. Young's six runner-up finishes without a victory has him in a tie with Colin Montgomerie and Briny Baird for the most in the past 40 years.

Ludvig Aberg, William Mouw, Denny McCarthy and Kevin Roy were 10 under, three shots back.

Roy, a 33-year-old PGA TOUR rookie, shot a career-best 63 after missing the cut in six of his previous eight events. Aberg and McCarthy each shot 64 and Mouw had his second straight 66.

GRAND CHESS TOUR

Teenaged Gukesh defeats idol Anand in Rapid segment

PTI ■ ZAGREB

Young Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh scored a memorable win over illustrious compatriot and idol Viswanathan Anand in the eighth round of the Rapid event of the 2023 SuperUnited Rapid and Blitz tournament, part of the Grand Chess Tour.

The 40-move win for the 17-year-old Gukesh late on Friday was his first ever over Anand and came in his maiden tournament match

against the five-time world champion.

The two Indians have 10 points each and are tied for fourth place. "It was a very important win. I'm happy," Gukesh's social media handle.

"I thought I was better, but he equalised quite easily. Then he blundered the back rank. And after that the position got really tricky. It was very hard to play from there. "We were discussing the game,"



he said about the discussion he had with Anand after the match.

Fabiano Caruana and Ian Nepomniachtchi remained co-leaders after the final day of the Rapid event, each with 12 points.

While the day 1 leader Anand stumbled and fell two points behind the leaders, world No. 1 Magnus Carlsen bounced back into form to take the clear third position going into two full days of blitz next.

Apart from the loss to Gukesh, Anand could only draw

his games against Jan-Krzysztof Duda (Poland) and Nepomniachtchi in rounds seven and nine respectively.

Gukesh started the final day of the Rapid section with a loss to Caruana before stunning Anand and holding Duda to a draw.

A 18-round blitz segment follows the rapid event in the tournament which features top players including Carlsen, Anand and Nepomniachtchi among others.

South Zone edge out North in intense finish, face West in repeat of 2022 final

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Tamil Nadu's R Sai Kishore came up with a splendid all-round show as South Zone trumped North Zone by two wickets on a rain-interrupted but thrilling last day of the Duleep Trophy semifinal here on Saturday.

In the final, South will take on defending champions West Zone in a repeat of the 2022 title clash.

Chasing 215 in overcast conditions, South Zone were in the driver's seat with Mayank Agarwal (54; 57b) and skipper Hanuma Vihari's (43; 42b) playing counterattacking knocks.

But the pace trio of Harshit Rana (3/84), Baltej Singh (2/47) and Vaibhav Arora (2/46) gave their side timely breakthroughs, while North skipper Jayant Yadav grabbed the prized scalp of Agarwal.

There were two rain interruptions, the longest was for about two hours just before the final session, when South required 32 runs with Ricky Bhui (34; 29b) and Tilak Varma (25; 19b) going great guns.

With five wickets intact, South had one foot in the final but they faced some anxious moments as they were aware that North would make the cut by virtue of their three-run first-innings lead, if there was no further play.

But play resumed and more



drama followed when Rana and Baltej's twin bursts pushed South in a precarious 213/8, after they lost four wickets for just 22 runs.

However, spin-bowling all-rounder Sai Kishore, who grabbed a tidy 3/28 to dismiss North for 211 in their second

essay, played the finisher's role with an unbeaten 15 that included two sixes under pressure.

Resuming the final day at 21 for no loss, South started on a brisk note with Agarwal racing to 24 off 19 balls.

Desperately looking to break the opening partnership, North skipper Yadav brought in Arora, and the change in bowling worked as he accounted for

Sai Sudharsan (17) after a 44-run opening stand.

The dismissal stopped the run-flow as Agarwal slowed down with the strike-rate going below 100 for the first time in his innings.

Arora struck again when he trapped Samarth R for five to keep North Zone's slender hopes alive.

But what followed was a counterattacking approach from skipper Vihari and Agarwal who added 59 runs in 40 deliveries.

Rain, then, added some drama to the run-chase.

With South at 68 for two and Agarwal on 35, rain inter-

rupted for the first time ahead of the lunch break.

Drizzle continued as they took an early lunch break, with South still needing 147 runs.

Rain stopped and in post-lunch session, Vihari and Agarwal continued from where they left.

Just when it looked like Agarwal and Vihari were in firm control, Yadav dismissed the former immediately after he had completed his half-century.

In the space of 23 runs, South skipper Vihari also followed suit, failing to capitalise on his good start.

On a high after his maiden national call-up for the West

Indies T20I series, Varma came in and took on the attack.

With dark clouds looming, Bhui and Varma's aggressive intent was expected and the duo in no time reduced the target under 50.

Just before the tea break, there was another rain stoppage with South needing 32 runs to win.

Looking at the fickle weather, Rana employed some game-delaying tactics, even as South had the upper hand.

But Bhui and Varma departed in successive overs, without any addition to the total with South 24 runs shy of the target.

Rana induced an edge and Prabhshimran Singh did the rest behind the stumps.

The seventh wicket tumbled when Rana induced a nick from Washington Sundar. KV Sasikanth smashed Rana for a six before being dismissed by Baltej.

With North on a roll, Vijaykumar Vyshak offered some resistance and withstood three deliveries from Baltej before the 26-year-old Sai Kishore sealed the issue with a six off Yadav.

South won by two wickets.

BRIEF SCORES:
North Zone 198 and 211.
South Zone 195 and 219/8; 82 overs (Mayank Agarwal 54, Hanuma Vihari 43, Ricky Bhui 34, Tilak Varma 25, R Sai Kishore 15 not out), South Zone won by two wickets.

Mckenzie, Athanaze earn maiden call-ups to West Indies squad for first Test against India



PTI ■ ROSEAU (DOMINICA)

West Indies have handed their maiden call-ups to left-handers Kirn McKenzie and Alick Athanaze while bringing back burly all-rounder Rahkeem Cornwall for the opening Test against India beginning here on July 12. The selection panel on Friday named a 13-member squad and two travelling reserves players for the series opener of the two-match series.

McKenzie and Athanaza, who has played an ODI, are in line to make their Test debut. Besides Cornwall, who played his last Test in November 2021, left-arm spinner Jomel Warrican has been named. Warrican was in the squad which toured Zimbabwe but missed the last tour of South Africa in February. He has played 13 Tests. Left-arm spinner Gudakesh Motie was unavailable for selection as he is undergoing rehabilitation from injury. "We were very impressed with the approach to batsmanship of McKenzie and Athanaze

on the recent 'A' Team tour of Bangladesh. These are two young players who got good scores and played with great maturity, and we believe they deserve an opportunity," said lead selector Desmond Haynes. "We are without Motie, who is doing his rehabilitation, and this has created an opportunity for Warrican and Cornwall in the spin bowling department. They have both played at Test match level before and are capable of doing the job."

"Kyle Mayers was also considered but he has some niggles, and the precaution is not to have him in the rigors of a five-day match at this stage."

The series will mark the start of a new WTC cycle for both India and West Indies. West Indies squad will travel to Dominica on Sunday following their ongoing pre-series camp at Coolidge Cricket Ground in Antigua. They will have training sessions on Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning in the build-up to the match.



Rayudu pulls out of MLC due to personal reasons

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India batter Ambati Rayudu has pulled out of the inaugural Major League Cricket in the USA due to personal reasons.

Rayudu was signed by CSK's sister franchisee Texas Super Kings soon after announcing retirement from the IPL in June.

The development comes at a time when the BCCI is mulling a cooling off period to prevent the trend of "pre-determined" retirement of Indian players.

Active Indian players are barred from playing in overseas leagues but the retired ones are allowed.

"Ambati Rayudu will not be available to participate in the first season of the MLC with Texas Super Kings due to personal reasons," Texas Super Kings said in a statement.

The Major League Cricket will be played in the USA from July 13 to 30. IPL franchisees including KKR, CSK and Mumbai Indians own teams in the competition.

Indian women's team looks to shake off rust in Bangladesh

PTI ■ MIRPUR

The Indian women's cricket team will be expecting the fresh faces to grab the opportunity with both hands and finishers to flourish in the three-match T20 series against Bangladesh beginning here on Sunday, its first international assignment in four months.

The T20 series will be followed by three ODIs beginning July 16. The Harmanpreet Kaur-led side was last in action at the T20 World Cup in South Africa where it endured a narrow loss to Australia in the knockout phase.

In an era where most male cricketers live out of a suitcase due to a relentless schedule, the members of the Indian women's team has had a lot of time to reflect and work on their game.

The last competitive event for the Indian players was the inaugural Women's Premier League in March. India, who now have all the resources at their disposal, have not been able to take their game to the next level and match the mighty Australia on a regular basis.

The team needs to improve on various aspects including fitness, bowling and the lack of finishers which come at a premium in the shortest format.

The star performers of the team over the past 12 months — pacer Renuka Thakur and wicketkeeper Richa Ghosh — are not part of this side due to injury and fitness issues respectively, providing an opening for the rookies to impress.

The seasoned Deepti Sharma will be expected to play the finisher's role in Ghosh's



absence with Pooja Vastrakar and Amanjot also needing to chip in with quickfire knocks towards the end of the innings.

Yastika Bhatta and the uncapped Uma Chetry are the two wicketkeeping options in the side. Yastika is expected to start on Sunday and needs to bat a lot quicker than her current strike rate of 85.38.

Bangladesh should not pose a lot of problems to India but pressure will be on opener Shafali Verma who has often been found wanting against the short ball since making her international debut in 2019.

The absence of left-arm spinners Radha Yadav and Rajeshwari Gayakwad can hand maiden caps to 20-year-old Anusha Baredy and Rashi Kanojia.

The series will also be a comeback for pacer Monica Patel and Meghna Singh will be eager to cement her place in the side after warming up the bench for the most of the last season.

Nooshin Al Khadeer, who guided India U-19s to the World Cup title and more recently the U-23 unit in Hong Kong, has been named interim coach for the tour with Amol Muzumdar's full-time appointment yet to be formalised.

The players trained at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru before leaving for Bangladesh. All games will be played at the Shere Bangla National Stadium. "Bangladesh are a very good side, they always play good cricket in home conditions. We are ready for the challenge. We have had two three days to prepare and we feel prepared in all the departments," said Harmanpreet on the eve of the game.

SQUADS:
Bangladesh: Nigar Sultana (captain, wk), Nahida Akter, Dilara Akter, Shathi Rani, Shamima Sultana, Sobhana Mostary, Murshida Khatun, Shorna Akter, Ritu Moni, Disha Biswas, Marufa Akter, Sanjida Akter Meghla, Rabeya Khan, Sultana Khatun, Salma Khatun, Fahima Khatun.

India: Harmanpreet Kaur (captain), Smriti Mandhana, Deepti Sharma, Shafali Verma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Yastika Bhatia (wk), Harleen Deol, Devika Vaidya, Uma Chetry (wk), Amanjot Kaur, S. Meghana, Pooja Vastrakar, Meghna Singh, Anjali Sarvani, Monica Patel, Rashi Kanojia, Anusha Baredy, Minnu Mani.

Early lunch as rain prevents any play in morning session at 3rd Ashes test

AP ■ LEEDS

England's bid for early Australia wickets in a gripping third Ashes test that the hosts must win was delayed by rain at Headingley on Saturday morning.

Australia was due to resume the third day on 116-4 in its second innings, with Travis Head (18 not out) and Mitch Marsh (17 not out) the overnight batters, but the start was delayed by thunder, lightning and heavy rain.

No ball was bowled in the morning session with an early lunch set at 12:30 p.m. (11:30 GMT) local time.

It may be a frustrating day ahead for both sides as more showers are forecast.

Australia leads the five-match series 2-0 and England must win this test to stay alive.

Head and Marsh had extended Australia's



fragile lead over England to 142 runs at stumps Friday.

England was all out for 237 in its first innings to get within 26 runs of Australia's first test. Australia captain Pat Cummins banked 6-91 for his first Ashes five-wicket haul in England. Cummins is trying to help his side clinch the Ashes for the first time in England since 2001.

Indian team storms into quarters but loses to Malaysia

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian team recorded a commanding 5-0 victory over Hong Kong and stormed into the quarter-finals of the Badminton Asia Junior Championships before going down to Malaysia on the second day of the tournament in Yogyakarta, Indonesia on Saturday.

The Indian shuttlers got off to a perfect start against Hong Kong as the mixed doubles pair of Samarveer and Radhika showcased their class by getting the better of Deng and Liu 21-10 21-14.

Continuing the momentum in the singles category, Ayush Shetty and Tara Shah reigned supreme against their



respective opponents with contrasting victories. While Ayush comfortably defeated Lam Ka To by 21-14 21-9, Tara secured a hard-fought 21-23 21-16 21-13 win against Liang Ka Wing.

The boys' doubles team of Nicholas and Tushar displayed their skills by outshining their opponents Chung and Yung 21-16 21-17 followed by Srinidhi and Radhika who capped off the

series of consecutive wins by defeating Liang and Liu 21-12 21-19.

Later in the day, the team endured a 0-5 defeat against Malaysia. In the singles matchups, Lakshay Sharma fell short against Eugene Ewe 14-21 15-21 while Rakshitha suffered a 13-21 21-15 15-21 defeat to Ong Xin Yee.

Nicholas and Tushar were beaten 12-21 19-21 by Goonting and Tai in the boys' doubles while Rakshitha and Shriyanshi lost 21-14, 14-21 12-21 against Ong and Ting.

The mixed doubles pair of Samarveer and Radhika were beaten 21-18 15-21 10-21 by Low and Chong.

The draws for the quarter-finals will take place on Sunday.

Murray exits Wimbledon with uncertainty after 5-set, 2-day loss to Tsitsipas

AP ■ WIMBLEDON

Andy Murray didn't know. As he was asked to dissect his loss to Stefanos Tsitsipas in the second round of Wimbledon — a rollicking five-setter that lasted more than 4 1/2 hours spread over two days before a packed Centre Court filled with thousands of his closest and loudest friends — Murray started answers to question after question at his news conference Friday with some variation of that theme.

It was, likely, a verbal crutch, something used to gather his thoughts before offering a more complete response. It also embodied the uncertainty that seems to surround a former No. 1 player who owns three Grand Slam titles, two at the All England Club, but also is now 36 and with an artificial hip after two operations.

Was it harder to accept this 7-6 (3), 6-7 (2), 4-6, 7-6 (3), 6-4 defeat, given both how close it was and all he's been through? "I don't know, to be honest," Murray's reply began.

Did the match change because it was suspended Thursday at 10:40 p.m., right after he'd taken a two-sets-to-one lead, because rules prevent play after 11 p.m.? "I don't know, to be honest."

How frustrating was it that the contest was put on hold for nearly 18 hours? "Well, you never know what would have happened."

Does the player ahead in that circumstance want to keep playing, while the player trailing prefers to stop? "I don't



Bopanna-Ebden make winning start

PTI ■ WIMBLEDON

India's Rohan Bopanna and his men's doubles partner Matthew Ebden from Australia survived a scare before prevailing over Argentine duo of Guillermo Duran and Tomas Etcheverry to advance to the second round of the Wimbledon here.

The sixth-seeded Indo-Australian duo outwitted the



spirited Argentine pair 6-2 6-7 (5-7) 7-6 (10-8) in their opening match that lasted two hours and 12 minutes.

The 43-year-old Bopanna and 35-year-old Ebden, who

claimed two doubles titles on the ATP Tour earlier this year, will next face the unseeded British pair of Jacob Fearnley and Johannus Monday on Sunday.

Bopanna and Ebden claimed the Qatar Open in February and in March, the Indian became the oldest player to win a Master Series tournament (ATP1000) at Indian Wells in USA.

know." Will he return to Wimbledon next year? "I don't know."

"I'm obviously very disappointed just now. You never know how many opportunities you're going to get to play here," Murray said. "The defeats, maybe feel a bit tougher. But, to be honest, every year that Wimbledon's not gone how I would like, it's been hard."

This was his second consecutive exit in the second round at the site of three of his greatest triumphs: the 2012 Olympic gold medal and the 2013 and 2016 Wimbledon championships. His trophy a decade ago was the first for a British man at the All England Club in singles in 77 years.

Murray has not been past the third round at any major since getting to the 2017 quarter-finals at Wimbledon.

"I mean, ultimately this was an opportunity for me. I had a good chance of having a proper run for the first time in a long time at a Slam. I didn't take it," he said, and bit on the collar of his white T-shirt.

Swiatek advances at Wimbledon, says pressure off; Sabalenka wins

AP ■ WIMBLEDON

An avid reader, Iga Swiatek knows how to contextualize her Wimbledon experiences. Her third-round exit last year after winning the French Open was a disappointment. The top-ranked Swiatek cleared that hurdle Friday at the All England Club, dispatching 30th-seeded Petra Martic 6-2, 7-5 to reach the fourth round.

"It's just a totally different chapter," the 22-year-old Pole said. The four-time Grand Slam champion can reach her first Wimbledon quarterfinal when she faces 14th-seeded Belinda Bencic on Sunday.

Swiatek has said she felt a lot of pressure last year from high expectations and the 35-match winning streak she carried into Wimbledon.

"I do feel more relaxed. I



think also because I won Roland Garros and I feel like after that the pressure is a little bit off because I reached my goal kind of for the season," she said.

"I don't have to think about anything else other than playing. ... I feel like I have more kind of, I don't know, free space in my head to develop my game and to work on my skills on grass." Unlike the men's side, where seven-time winner Novak Djokovic is a heavy favorite, the women's field is

tougher to handicap. The top three seeds — Swiatek, Aryna Sabalenka and defending champion Elena Rybakina — are showing signs of becoming a "Big Three."

Sabalenka, the Australian Open champion who was a Wimbledon semifinalist in 2021, advanced to the third round with a 2-6, 7-5, 6-2 win over Varvara Gracheva.

Madison Keys, who beat Viktorija Golubic 7-5, 6-3 to reach the third round, said the "Big Three" title is deserved.

"They are obviously at the top of the game right now, so I think it's a great term to describe the three of them," said the American, who is seeded 25th. After the top three seeds, there's No. 4 Jessica Pegula, who advanced to the fourth round with a 6-4, 6-0 victory over Elisabetta Cocciaretto.

"We cast away
priceless time in
dreams, born of
imagination, fed upon
illusion, and put to
death by reality"
— Judy Garland



A WARRIOR CALLED SHARAD PAWAR

Resilience and fortitude have undoubtedly played vital roles in Pawar's political career, but alongside these traits, he has also demonstrated a level of flexibility that teeters on the line between treachery, cunning, and disloyalty, writes NAVIN UPADHYAY

In his autobiography, 'Leading from the Front', Maratha strongman Sharad Pawar wrote, 'Crisis tests the mettle of leaders. It is during challenging times that true leadership emerges, guiding us towards solutions and offering hope to those in need.' These lofty words encapsulate Pawar's own political journey, as he now finds himself at the center of a political storm orchestrated by none other than his own nephew, Ajit Pawar, marking a full circle in his political career.

Back in 1978, a young and ambitious Sharad Pawar rebelled against his own party, the Congress, and his mentor, Vasantdada Patil, forming a coalition government with the Janata Party and the Peasants' and Workers' Party of India. This opportunistic move propelled him into his first tenure as the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, setting a record as the state's youngest CM at the age of 38—a record that has stood the test of time.

However, after forty-four years, the aging stalwart of Maharashtra politics faces a new challenge from within his own family. Ajit Pawar, his own nephew, has orchestrated treacherous political maneuvers that have left Sharad Pawar at a crossroads. Senior Pawar may audaciously claim that age is just a number and whether he is 82 or 92, he would remain as effective as ever, but the reality could present a different picture. Age and health concerns are not the only obstacles that could impede the Maratha strongman. The real challenge lies in finding experienced recruits capable of replacing influential figures like Ajit Pawar, Chaggan Bhujbal, Praful Patel, and Sunil Tatkare, among others, who formed the backbone of the NCP. These leaders wielded considerable influence in their respective regions and mobilized significant resources for the party. With central agencies keen to pounce on anyone aligning with Sharad Pawar, regaining supremacy in Maharashtra politics will be an uphill battle for the veteran leader.

Nevertheless, it would be imprudent to underestimate the political prowess and cunning of Sharad Pawar. Despite criticisms of his shady political maneuvering and

questions surrounding his credibility, the octogenarian leader continues to command immense goodwill among the people. He possesses the ability to leverage this public sentiment to his advantage if he strategically plays his cards right. Two incidents stand as a testament to his mass appeal and ability to connect with the common people. One such incident occurred during a Lok Sabha by-election rally in Satara in October 2019, where heavy rainfall drenched the venue. Undeterred by the downpour, Pawar made a powerful statement by refusing to use an umbrella while addressing the crowd. This act of resilience and solidarity resonated deeply with the masses, garnering admiration and highlighting why he is revered as a leader of the people. The incident quickly gained traction on social media, becoming a turning point in the election campaign. The NCP candidate Shrinivas Patil won the poll by a huge margin. The viral video of Pawar braving the rain and delivering his speech for ten minutes undoubtedly played a role in altering the course of the election.

Another incident in September 2019 showcased Pawar's influence and power. When he announced his intention to walk to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) office in Mumbai to participate in a probe, the Maharashtra government and state police were alarmed, fearing a potential law and order situation. This was Sharad Pawar's way of taking on the ED and its perpetual threats. The state government and the Mumbai police pleaded with Pawar to cancel his visit, and he complied. This episode further highlighted the clout and respect the veteran leader commands in Maharashtra.

These episodes serve as a testament to Pawar's ability to fight back and adapt to challenging circumstances. It would be premature to write his political obituary, especially when the last chapters on Ajit Pawar's rebellion and Eknath Shinde's dilemma are yet to be written.

Amidst every crisis, there lies an opportunity. Sharad Pawar may harbor hopes that the BJP-NCP-Shinde alliance will eventually encounter internal contradictions and clashes of interest. Ajit Pawar's

SENIOR PAWAR MAY AUDACIOUSLY CLAIM THAT AGE IS JUST A NUMBER AND WHETHER HE IS 82 OR 92, HE REMAINS AS EFFECTIVE AS EVER, BUT THE REALITY COULD PRESENT A DIFFERENT PICTURE. AGE AND HEALTH CONCERNS ARE NOT THE ONLY OBSTACLES THAT COULD IMPEDE THE MARATHA STRONGMAN. THE REAL CHALLENGE LIES IN FINDING EXPERIENCED RECRUITS CAPABLE OF REPLACING INFLUENTIAL FIGURES LIKE AJIT PAWAR, CHAGGAN BHUJBAL, PRAFUL PATEL, AND SUNIL TATKARE, AMONG OTHERS, WHO FORMED THE BACKBONE OF THE NCP. THESE LEADERS WIELDED CONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE IN THEIR RESPECTIVE REGIONS AND MOBILIZED SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES FOR THE PARTY. WITH CENTRAL AGENCIES KEEN TO PONCE ON ANYONE ALIGNING WITH SHARAD PAWAR, REGAINING SUPREMACY IN MAHARASHTRA POLITICS WILL BE AN UPHILL BATTLE FOR THE VETERAN LEADER



ambitious claim to contest 90 out of the 280 assembly seats could potentially exert pressure on Eknath Shinde to settle for nothing less. Such a scenario could leave the BJP with a diminished seat share, reducing their current hold on 105 MLAs to a mere 100. The BJP will never accept such a scenario come what may. On the other hand, if Shinde and 15 other supporting MLAs were to face disqualification, Shinde's bargaining power would dwindle, allowing the BJP to assert dominance within the alliance.

This turn of events could potentially lead to a realignment in Maharashtra politics, as some disillusioned former Shiv Sena members, if not received warmly by Uddhav Thackeray, may seek refuge within the NCP. This resulting consolidation of the party and the ensuing chaos in the state's political landscape would present a golden opportunity for Sharad Pawar to rebuild his own base and reinforce his influence.

Resilience and fortitude have undoubtedly played vital roles in Pawar's political career, but alongside these traits, he has also demonstrated a level of flexibility that teeters on the line between treachery, cunning, and disloyalty. These qualities have been employed strategically to secure victories in his political battles. Pawar's ability to navigate complex situations and make calculated decisions has been instrumental in his long-standing successes. It is within this complex tapestry of qualities that his leadership style and political acumen have emerged. These are some of the qualities that also shaped his childhood and formative years.

Born on December 12, 1940, in the town of Baramati in Maharashtra, Sharad Pawar was raised in a middle-class family. His parents, Govindrao Pawar, and Shardabai Pawar, instilled in him the values of hard work and perseverance from a young age. These core values would become the guiding principles of his political career.

Pawar's education began in local schools in Baramati, where he displayed exceptional academic prowess. Later, he pursued higher studies in Pune, attending Brihan

Maharashtra College of Commerce. It was during his college years that Pawar's interest in politics took root, and he began to actively engage in student politics as a sophomore.

Sharad Pawar's journey into the realm of politics gained momentum during his time at Brihan Maharashtra College of Commerce. Known for his charisma, intellect, and persuasive oratory skills, he quickly became a prominent figure in student politics. Pawar championed the cause of students, addressing their concerns, and working towards improving their educational experience. His ability to connect with his peers and articulate their aspirations set him apart as a natural leader.

Inspired by the ideals of the Indian National Congress and the charismatic national leaders of the time, Sharad Pawar joined the party in the 1960s. Pawar's exceptional organizational skills propelled him into leadership positions, both within the student wing and the party itself.

During his early political years, Pawar found mentorship and guidance under the influential leader Vasantdada Patil, who recognized Pawar's potential and took him under his wing. This mentor-protégé relationship played a significant role in shaping Pawar's political acumen, providing him with invaluable insights into governance, leadership, and the intricate dynamics of Maharashtra politics.

Sharad Pawar's rise to prominence within Congress and Maharashtra politics gained momentum in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Pawar's focus on rural development, and agricultural issues, and his empathetic approach endeared him to the masses, solidifying his position as a leader who championed the causes of the common people.

In 1978, Sharad Pawar embarked on a momentous journey that would solidify his reputation as a political maverick. Disillusioned with certain aspects of his own party, Pawar rebelled against the then Chief Minister Vasantdada Patil and formed a coalition government with the opposition parties—the Janata Party and the Peasants' and Workers' Party of India. This bold move

showcased Pawar's political astuteness and his ability to build alliances to achieve his vision of a better Maharashtra. At the age of 38, he became Maharashtra's youngest Chief Minister, setting a record that still stands to this day.

Pawar's tenure as Chief Minister witnessed several significant initiatives and reforms, including measures to improve rural infrastructure, agricultural development, and the empowerment of marginalized communities. His focus on inclusive governance and his ability to navigate the complex dynamics of coalition politics earned him both praise and criticism. Throughout his term, Pawar displayed resilience and determination in the face of various challenges, solidifying his position as a political force to be reckoned with. Sharad Pawar's early years laid the foundation for his remarkable political journey, one marked by resilience, dedication, and a deep-rooted commitment to public service. From his humble beginnings in Baramati to his rise as a visionary leader in Maharashtra and Indian politics, Pawar has consistently demonstrated his ability to connect with people and articulate their aspirations.

Sharad Pawar's life is a testament to the unwavering spirit of a leader who has faced and conquered numerous challenges, emerging even stronger. His ability to navigate complex political landscapes has become the hallmark of his legacy. Through the highs and lows, he has exemplified resilience, courage, and an unyielding pursuit of power. Pawar's journey serves as a powerful reminder that true leadership is forged in the crucible of challenges.

In his book 'Leading from the Front', Pawar skillfully captures the true essence of leadership, highlighting that it goes beyond mere positions of power. It involves embracing responsibility, fearlessly facing challenges, forging alliances, and tirelessly striving for the welfare of those we serve. As he endeavors to silence his critics and revive his party, Pawar will rely on these qualities and more. However, he faces daunting odds in his path forward.

(Navin Upadhyay is the Executive Editor of The Pioneer)

ORAL HEALTH GOES FAR BEYOND THE MOUTH

There have been several studies that show that poor oral health can cause an array of health issues elsewhere in the body such as the heart. Now it has been found that ignoring dental health can wreak havoc on the brain also during old age, causing cognitive disorders like Alzheimer's disease and dementia, reports ARCHANA JYOTI

A study published recently in the online issue of Neurology says that people who do not take care of their oral health may be more likely to develop structural changes in the brain that are associated with cognitive decline resulting in memory and Alzheimer's disease.

The researchers found that gum disease and tooth loss were linked to "Tooth loss and gum disease, which is inflammation of the tissue around the teeth that can cause shrinkage of the gums. The study, however, does not establish that gum disease or tooth loss causes Alzheimer's disease; rather, it demonstrates a link.

Study author Satoshi Yamaguchi, of Tohoku University in Sendai, Japan said, "Our study found that these conditions may play a role in the health of the brain area that controls thinking and memory, giving people another reason to take better care of their teeth."

The study involved 172 people with an average age of 67 who did not have memory problems at the beginning of the study. Participants had dental exams and took memory tests at the beginning of the study. They also had brain scans to measure volume of the hippocampus at the beginning of the study and again four years later.

For each participant, researchers counted the number of teeth and checked for gum disease by looking at periodontal probing depth, a measurement of the gum tissue. Healthy readings are from one to three millimeters.

Mild gum disease involved



probing depths of three or four millimeters in several areas, while severe gum disease involved probing depths of five or six millimeters in several areas as well as more bone loss. This can cause teeth to become loose and eventually fall out.

Researchers found that the number of teeth and amount of gum disease was linked to changes in the left hippocampus of the brain. For people with mild gum disease having fewer teeth was associated with a faster rate of brain shrinkage in the left hippocampus.

However, for people with severe gum disease having more teeth was associated with a faster rate of brain shrinkage in the same area of the brain. After controlling for age, the researchers discovered that for those with minor gum disease,

the increase in the rate of brain shrinkage caused by one fewer tooth was equivalent to roughly one year of brain aging. In contrast, for patients with severe gum disease, one extra tooth caused an increase in brain shrinkage comparable to 1.3 years of brain aging.

"These results highlight the importance of preserving the health of the teeth and not just retaining the teeth," Yamaguchi said. "The findings suggest that retaining teeth with severe gum disease is associated with brain atrophy. Controlling the progression of gum disease through regular dental visits is crucial, and teeth with severe gum disease may need to be extracted and replaced with appropriate prosthetic devices."

This is not all. In fact, taking care of dental health is like

'a stitch in time saves nine.' Poor oral hygiene might lead to increased bacteria in the mouth and to gum disease, which can cause inflammation and raise the risk of beta-amyloid plaques in the brain, leading to dementia.

For instance, a study which was presented at the American Stroke Association's International Stroke Conference indicated that markers of bad oral health — including gum disease, missing teeth, and plaque buildup — are associated with an increased risk of stroke.

Dr. Cyprien Rivier, a study author and a postdoctoral fellow in neurology at the Yale School of Medicine in Connecticut, told a news agency that while previous research linked poor dental

KEYFACTS

- Oral diseases, while largely preventable, pose a major health burden for many countries and affect people throughout their lifetime, causing pain, discomfort, disfigurement and even death.
- It is estimated that oral diseases affect nearly 3.5 billion people.
- Untreated dental caries (tooth decay) in permanent teeth is the most common health condition according to the Global Burden of Disease 2019.
- Treatment for oral health conditions is expensive and usually not part of universal health coverage (UHC).
- Most low- and middle-income countries do not have sufficient services available to prevent and treat oral health conditions.
- Oral diseases are caused by a range of modifiable risk factors common to many noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), including sugar consumption, tobacco use, alcohol use and poor hygiene, and their underlying social and commercial determinants. (SOURCE: WHO)

health to heart disease risk factors, the new research evaluated the relationship between oral health and brain health.

"Our study expands existing evidence showing the adverse effects of oral health on

cardiovascular health by extending it to brain health," he explained. "The core message is that we need to be extra careful with our oral hygiene because it has implications far beyond the mouth."

Rivier and his colleagues reported that people with a genetic predisposition to cavities and missing teeth were more likely to have brain health issues.

By analyzing the data of about 40,000 adults with an average age of 57 in the UK Biobank researchers said they found that people with poor oral health were more likely to have accumulated damage in the brain's white matter.

Rivier said the next avenues for research include replicating these findings in different populations.

"If this research is confirmed, taking measures to improve oral health could lead to significant benefits at a population level," he said. "We also hope that our work will encourage future research on the effects of oral health on other organs and conditions."

Rivier also noted that the study is preliminary and more evidence — ideally through clinical trials — needs to be gathered in order to show that improving oral health leads to brain health benefits.

Dentists say that timely interventions, such as encouraging the use of dentures and other orthodontic treatments and large-scale education programs on the importance of oral hygiene in older adults, might help prevent or slow down cognitive decline linked to tooth loss.

Love doing exercise? Be mindful of your iron intake

If you are a fitness freak, then it is essential for you to be cautious and ensure that you consume enough iron in your diet to endure the high-intensity activities like exercise, says Nutrition Advisor KAVITA DEVGAN

Iron deficiency is a widespread nutritional deficiency around the world. If left untreated, it can result in symptoms such as fatigue and anemia. These symptoms, along with various other health issues, can significantly impact a person's ability to exercise regularly, further negatively affecting the body.

But that's not all! Engaging in endurance or high-intensity exercise can also lead to the loss of iron from the body due to heavy sweating. Moreover, this essential mineral plays a crucial role in helping the body metabolize carbohydrates, which serve as the primary fuel source for our muscles during high-intensity activities. Hence, it becomes evident that the more exercise one does, the greater the iron requirement becomes. That's why people who exercise need to be especially mindful of their iron intake.

The significance of this factor applies to everyone, but it holds particular importance for women in their reproductive years. Therefore, it is essential for them to be especially cautious and make sure they consume enough iron in their diet. An article recently published in the Journal Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise emphasized the high prevalence of iron deficiency among endurance athletes, specifically female runners. Studies reviewed in this article seem to indicate that iron depletion was higher in female than male athletes. These findings



underscore the increased vulnerability of women in this regard.

SOME SYMPTOMS TO BE VIGILANT ABOUT

Common anemia symptoms include fatigue, breathlessness, headaches, poor memory, and sleep issues. Vegetarian women may encounter difficulties with iron supply, but they can address this by including lentils, soybeans, nuts, fruits (bananas, apples, pomegranates), dark green leafy vegetables (spinach, drumstick leaves), dried apricots, peaches, prunes, raisins, and vitamin C-rich foods in their diet to ensure proper iron absorption.

CONCLUSION

To address iron deficiency conveniently and effectively, one may consider iron-enriched salt options that provide a significant portion of daily iron needs. Also consuming iron-rich foods like spinach, lean meats, legumes, and fortified cereals is important. This comprehensive approach is particularly crucial for combating iron deficiency, which is prevalent among many women and children in India.

NEWS BRIEFS

HMD Foundation, Amrita Hospital ink pact

HMD Foundation, a CSR wing of Hindustan Syringes & Medical Devices Ltd and AMRITA Hospital has inked a pact to provide healthcare facilities for free or at a very reasonable cost to the people in need.

HMD Foundation has doled out financial assistance of over Rs one crore for the procurement of the iLAB (mobile testing laboratory) to the Amrita Hospital Faridabad to support them in extending quality medical care to the

people in Faridabad and the surrounding region.

The iLAB unit, which was manufactured by Andhra Med Tech Zone (AMTZ) at Visakhapatnam, staffed with a doctor and lab technician, is equipped with state-of-the-art Made in India equipment and computers that seamlessly connect with the hospital's Cloud server. Patients can register and book appointments at the indigenous iLAB Unit, just as they would at the hospital. The initiative aims to reach and provide

medical services to over a million people in the region.

Rajiv Nath from Hindustan Syringes & Medical Devices Ltd said "At HMD, we are always working towards making quality healthcare affordable & accessible to the common masses as a Corporate Vision by our medical products and our CSR Programs. We are delighted to donate this advanced vehicle to Amrita Hospital to conveniently reach people and provide diagnostic services for enabling preventive public healthcare."

THE National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) has announced the launch of 'Rohini Nilekani Centre for Brain and Mind', a centre dedicated to conduct long-term examination of environmental and genetic factors involved in brain development that underlie severe mental illnesses.

Rohini Nilekani, Chairperson, Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies who unveiled the plaque to mark the inauguration of the Centre at the NCBS campus in Bengaluru said, "it will support research through its partnership with the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) and NCBS' therapeutic practices pertaining to five mental disorders: schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, addiction, obses-

Centre for research on severe mental illnesses launched



sive-compulsive disorder, and dementia — conditions considered neurodevelopmental in origin." The research work of the centre will combine the molecular biological research capabilities and technologies at NCBS with the

stem cell capabilities established at the Institute for Stem Cell Science and Regenerative Medicine (inStem-DBT).

Dr Pratima Murthy, Director, NIMHANS, said, "The Centre will enable us to look further into

the common as well as distinctive biological (including genetic) and psychosocial underpinnings of disorders such as schizophrenia, bipolar mood disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorders, addictive disorders and dementia."

Long Covid & Its Disabling Effects On Hip Joints

Post-Covid health woes continue. Many patients are being diagnosed with the long post-Covid complications of Avascular Necrosis (AVN) of femoral head (hip), referred to as bone death. DR SARVESH PANDEY advises that early detection and early treatment makes it possible to reverse the disease immediately

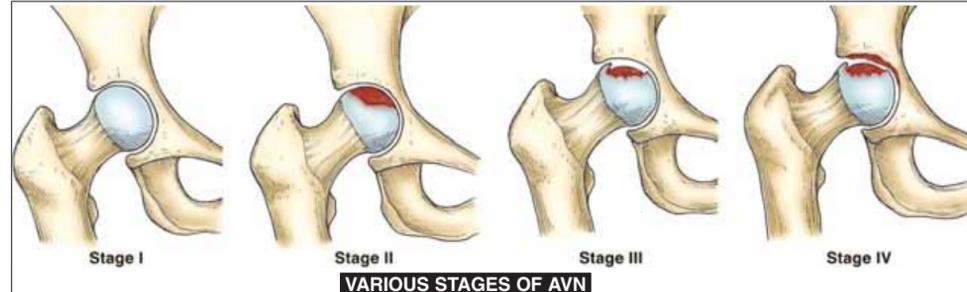
AVN is an important etiology of arthritis of the hip. Avascular necrosis is the death of bone tissue due to a lack of blood supply and it most commonly affects the femur (thigh bone) and damages one of the most important weight bearing joints in the body. Incidence of AVN of femoral head (hip) has increased in the last two years. One of the main known factors causing AVN is excessive usage of steroids during Covid-19 era which was given to reduce the severity of infection as life-saving measures.

However, one must remember that not all patients on steroids will develop AVN as it occurs in only those who are sensitive to certain steroids or



DR SARVESH PANDEY Senior Resident, Dept of Orthopaedic, RML Hospital, Delhi

those who have a predilection for developing AVN. The bone condition can also be caused by traumatic events such as a fracture, dislocation of joints or during cancer treatment due to radiation exposure. Alcohol or steroid abuse is also a major risk factor.



We are also witnessing higher Incidence of AVN in the younger population which is a major deviation from earlier. Younger age group, male population, persons with co-morbidities like diabetes and respiratory issues are specifically more affected. We have also wit-

nessed patient cases from rural and remote places having unexplained pain around the hip joint when investigated and found to be suffering from this disease. Our hospital has witnessed a 20 per cent increase in AVN cases, and the requirement of surgery has also spiked

by roughly 20 per cent in the last one year.

AVN affects people of any age group but is more common in males and those around 30-50 years.

In Covid-survivor the symptoms are often visible 6-9 months after recovery from the

illness. AVN leads to symptoms of pain in the hip joint, buttocks, and upper thigh region. Other symptoms include stiffness, inability to take up the weight on the affected leg, and limping. Almost 30%-40% of patients have bilateral issues in which they suffer from pain in both of

their hip joints. Hence, early diagnosis of such conditions is considered important for treatment. In fact, early detection can help prevent major surgery involving metal implants altogether.

AVN has different stages. First is a pre-collapse state where pain is only symptoms of complaint by patients. In this stage, the shape of the femoral head is well preserved and if treated well, chances of further progression may be prevented.

Next category is the post-collapse state where the femoral head collapses, the hip joint becomes arthritic and all movements at the hip joint are painful. Patients have difficulty in doing their regular work leading to disability. In the pre-collapse state, where the shape of the femoral head is preserved, core decom-

pression with or without bone grafting is recommended. This is done in conjunction with some specialised medications given in hope that collapse can be prevented. Whereas, when the femoral head has collapsed then there are only a few alternatives, osteotomy is one of options. In grades I and II we do core decompression, a surgical procedure that involves surgical drilling into the area of dead bone near the joint. This reduces pressure, allows increased blood flow, and slows or stops bone or joint destruction.

Total hip replacement surgery is recommended only as the last option. In non-steroid AVN, stage one and two, success rates vary between 30 to 60 per cent, but in steroid induced cases this is reduced to 20 to 30 per cent.

A step closer to mission Digital India

Technology has significantly transformed our lives and revolutionised the way we engage with the world. However, this transformation has also brought forth numerous privacy challenges. That is why the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill 2023, which aims to establish the first comprehensive national data privacy law in India, is an essential piece of legislation that many people have eagerly anticipated for a long time.

Although the finer details of the bill are not yet public, its passage is likely to encounter the usual disagreements, questionable lobbying tactics by social media giants, and relentless protests by the Opposition. Nevertheless, as progress is being made, after the approval of the Union Cabinet, towards curbing the excessive and unrestricted collection of citizens' personal information, the bill is likely to witness the emergence of a silent consensus and the development of a robust law that empowers individuals with greater control over their data and holds companies accountable for their unethical data practices.

The lack of adequate remedies is a common complaint among victims of data theft. For instance, when individuals find their private photos have been posted online without their knowledge and consent, they often face limited options for recourse. Such incident necessitates collaboration among businesses, government agencies, and law enforcement bodies. Sharing information about emerging fraud trends and tactics enables the development of proactive strategies and responses.

The most interesting part and primary objective of the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill 2023 is to hold entities such as internet companies, mobile apps, and business establishments accountable for the collection, storage, and processing of citizens' data,



in line with the "Right to Privacy" principle, and impose penalties of up to Rs 250 crore on violators.

While the Government has put Digital India in mission mode, the lack of robust data privacy laws poses a nightmare for many willing to embrace the digital life. The push for the digital life has brought with it

an unfortunate increase in fraud and cybercrimes. As more transactions, data, and services migrate online, fraudsters and cybercriminals have sought out new avenues to exploit vulnerabilities and defraud individuals and organisations.

Although financial institutions regularly try to raise

awareness about common fraud schemes, avoiding suspicious links, and suggesting regular password updates to combat fraud in the digital realm, we need to have robust cybersecurity measures. These include foolproof security audits, penetration testing, firewalls, intrusion detection systems, and encryption protocols.

Additionally, implementing multi-factor authentication and biometric identification will further reduce the risk of unauthorised access to the data of unsuspecting individuals. Data protection requires further investment in updating preventive measures as fraudsters evolve their techniques. Artificial intelligence-based

advanced fraud detection and prevention systems can identify and mitigate fraudulent activities in real-time.

However, artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT can compromise data privacy if used imprudently. When we utilise the tool to answer questions or perform tasks, we might inadvertently disclose

sensitive information, thereby making it accessible to the public.

Hence, it is crucial to give priority to the development and implementation of "Ethical AI," ensuring fairness, transparency, and accountability in decision-making procedures. A lack of ethical AI biases in data and algorithms flourishes.

However, the interplay among data protection, AI, and financial insecurity demands prioritising data protection by implementing data minimisation principles. The law must ensure that only the necessary data is collected, and that too with informed consent from individuals. In the past, issues like unauthorised demands for Aadhaar details to avail mobile telephony and other services have already been dealt with by the courts. Ironically even after the judgment, many telecom companies continued to insist on Aadhaar details. Therefore, organisations need to ensure that their data collection, retention, and processing practices are proportionate and comply with relevant privacy regulations.

Besides, those collecting personal data must be made accountable to safeguard sensitive data. For this, organisations need to implement encryption, access controls, and provide employee training on data protection. The onus is on the Government and regulatory bodies to establish clear guidelines and regulatory frameworks. These regulations should carefully consider the potential impact on data protection and financial security. Striking a balance between enabling innovation and safeguarding individuals' rights and interests is paramount. Without this balance, the dream of a flourishing Digital India will remain unfulfilled.

(The writer is Associate Editor & News Editor, The Pioneer)

Technology transforms lives, but produces privacy challenges. The Digital Personal Data Protection Bill 2023 aims to establish comprehensive data privacy laws in India, empowering individuals and holding companies accountable. Collaboration, robust cybersecurity, and ethical AI are crucial. Data minimisation, encryption, and accountability measures are essential. Striking a balance between innovation and rights is paramount for a flourishing Digital India



SWARN KUMAR ANAND

PERSPECTIVE

Elderly stakeholders in climate action

Climate change disproportionately affects vulnerable elderly individuals, particularly older women and people with disabilities, impacting their well-being and rights. Policy interventions should consider their needs, engage them in climate action, and promote accessible transportation, healthcare, and sustainable livelihood programs for their protection and mitigation of climate change



KT CHACKO



RAJESHWAR DEVARAKONDA

Climate change and an aging global populace are two major concerns that don't necessarily feature on the same page. Nonetheless, the adverse impact of climate change falls more heavily on the elderly due to the negative effect on their rights. This is primarily because they are more vulnerable due to several factors such as poverty, gender, geography, social status, disability, etc.

The elderly, especially older women and people with disabilities, are most affected by climate-linked dangers such as heatwaves, the rising spread of vector-borne diseases, as well as the growing intensity and frequency of sudden or slow-onset disasters that hurt their physical, economic, mental, and emotional well-being.

Disproportionate burden on the elderly

According to an analytical study on climate change and the human rights of older people done by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the elderly shoulder a disproportionate impact from climate change on effectively enjoying their rights while climate policies and laws can neglect or marginalise the elderly. The report also noted that, as per estimates, there will be 1.5 billion more people than 65 years old by 2050. These cohorts would be more vulnerable to climate change because of physical, economic, political, and social factors.

Ageism, by default or by design, will contribute to their increasing vulnerability. The pandemic has already revealed that age-related discrimina-

tion creates and exacerbates poverty and the marginalisation of older people, increasing their human rights risks. In facing climate change, the elderly confront negative impacts on health; access to food, water, land, and sanitation; housing; livelihood; and their overall well-being.

These impacts were well illustrated when a heatwave in Western Europe led to crop shortages in 2003, killing thousands, including 14,000 people in France. The heat-linked deaths in France witnessed 80 per cent of fatalities from people over 75 years old.

Indian scenario

Like elsewhere, the situation in India is no different. As people grow older, their declining health, diminishing physical strength, disabilities, bereavement, and loss of income can all combine to make elderly persons more vulnerable to external events.

Against this backdrop, the country's demographic dividend stands at a crossroad, as the elderly are anticipated to outnumber the youth by 2036, as per the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation's "Youth in India 2022" report. The shift in the population pyramid will occur due to a drop in fertility and rising life expectancy. The report further reveals that from 6.8 per cent in 1991, the percentage of the elderly increased to 9.2 per cent in 2016 and is expected to touch 14.9 per cent in 2036.

Reasons for greater vulnerability

Some elaboration is



required to decode the physical, social, economic, and geographic reasons that make the elderly more susceptible to negative climate change consequences. The major elements are:

Temperature: As temperatures rise pan-India, heatwaves occur more frequently and intensely, which is more dangerous for senior citizens, given their vulnerability to heat

stroke and heat exhaustion. **Air pollution:** Climate change often worsens the air quality, with adverse outcomes for the elderly, particularly people with pre-existing respiratory ailments or cardiovascular conditions.

Water scarcity: Global warming has led to lower rainfall in many regions. This makes it challenging for senior citizens to access potable water

and maintain adequate hygiene levels, increasing the prospects of water-borne diseases that are more dangerous for elders with compromised immune systems.

Food insecurity: Climate change is leading to progressively lower crop yields. The resultant food insecurity is exacerbating the hardships of the elderly, who already face hurdles in consuming a nutritious diet.

Extreme weather conditions: Climate change has triggered erratic weather patterns, increasing the frequency and intensity of these extreme events. The resulting devastation is more difficult for the elderly, who may face major problems in evacuating or managing the aftermath. Limited mobility, as well as inadequate access to transport and resources, only makes matters worse for them.

Increasing disasters: Worldwide, the number of climate-linked disasters, especially floods and cyclones, has only increased, as well as their intensity. The East Coast has seen at least 2-3 severe cyclonic storms each year in the past decade, and while the landfall may occur in Bangladesh, the resultant heavy rains and floods cause intense loss to livelihoods, giving little chance to the elderly already on subsistence livelihood to recover before the next big one. States of Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh have been traditionally battered with floods, and even arid regions in Rajasthan and Gujarat have seen flash floods. The Kerala Floods have led to Post Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSDs) among the

elderly of the state.

Considering these circumstances and the increased vulnerability of older persons to climate change, it is essential to ensure greater protection for them from hostile conditions.

Engaging elderly in climate discourse

But safeguarding the interests of the elderly through relevant policies and programs is only possible if decision-makers understand their precise needs. Given this scenario, the elderly must be made a part of the climate action discourse in the country. In this way, it will be easier to address and resolve financial, housing, or other infrastructure and social isolation issues that act as significant barriers to improving the quality of their lives.

Consulting the elderly is vital, as they are physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially in a disadvantaged position in coping with the impact of climate change consequences, as compared to other sections of society. Conversely, older people harbour vast reservoirs of knowledge and experience that could be useful in formulating relevant initiatives to mitigate adverse climate change outcomes. Failure to tap into this vast knowledge base would only bloat the nation's economic and societal burden.

For example, accessible and affordable public transportation and health infrastructure across the country could be useful for all cohorts during extreme weather events or other emergencies, ensuring better preparedness for society

at large. Along with strategically-placed trauma centres across all districts, the availability of paramedics and other healthcare professionals could help minimise mortality rates during emergencies.

Another objective should be to promote livelihood programs led by the elderly in tune with nature, such as organic farming, vermicomposting, tree cropping, and the like. In turn, such elders can be trained to encourage other elderly community members to adopt similar means that leave a beneficial impact on the environment and climate change goals. The tremendous potential for people from this age group to act as mentors and play an active role in contributing to the climate change control agenda needs to be leveraged and acknowledged.

In this context, even elementary measures such as planting thousands of trees across cities can help bolster the tree canopy, providing more places for resting under the shade, which could benefit the homeless and those left stranded during natural calamities. Greater tree cover will not only lead to more cooling of surrounding areas but also help in absorbing carbon emissions, indirectly mitigating climate change.

All the above measures and more must be undertaken for the elderly, who were once the sole support systems of today's youth.

(KT Chacko, is member, governing body; and Rajeshwar Devarakonda is Mission Head, Livelihood & Emergencies, at HelpAge India)

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

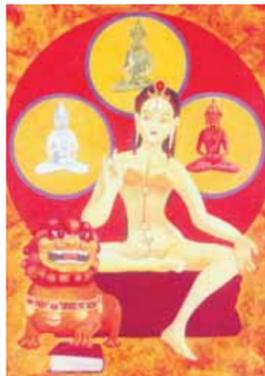
MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

Re-inventing your old customs will serve you well at this time. You may reconnect with a childhood friend and share a lot of life experiences. You were revitalised and encouraged to move on in life with some fresh ideas. On the professional front, your perseverance and willpower have enabled you to achieve what appeared unreachable earlier. An unexpected burst of creative spark arrives, ushering in the voyage of a new creative vision. Yet, it may be inappropriate to discuss the specifics of your goals now. On the romance front, you are upbeat and chirpy, and you have the potential to win your loved one's heart. If you are in a love relationship, you may need to refocus on the future.

Lucky number 11 | **Lucky colour** Pastel Blue
Lucky day Thursday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

This week, you must prioritise your health. If you have low energy, you most certainly have a BP problem. You may miss some of life's most essential and fun occasions due to health concerns. Take preventative actions ahead of time. This week, your career takes off, and you feel on top of the world. The card includes promotion, recognition, and appreciation. People in business will get market goodwill when they come up with some amazing concepts. Personal relationships mirror your irritation and frustration. Relationships will experience mixed emotions this week. You are not in the mood to make compromises and live on your terms. Your loved ones may be offended at first, but they will gradually appreciate the depth of your beliefs.

Lucky number 20 | **Lucky colour** Off-White
Lucky day Sunday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

Take precautions this week since water-borne infections may affect you. Moderate modifications to your lifestyle are necessary. Watch what you eat since digestion, acidity, and gastrointestinal issues are possible. Limit your intake of tea, coffee, and spicy foods. Professionally, you will be impulsive at work, which is not a good thing. Push yourself to the limit. Combine your theoretical and practical ideas. If something is not functioning, do not criticise or point out flaws in others. All you must do is work honestly and smartly. Domestic difficulties will demand your attention on a personal front. Rearrange your schedule so that you can give attention to the people who matter. Do not mix your personal and business lives. Prevent any emotional stress in your relationships.

Lucky number 9 | **Lucky colour** Red
Lucky day Tuesday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

You will be in good health this week. You feel enlightened to give your happiness, wealth, or knowledge for the benefit of others. You will get more active in your community. You have a strong urge to contribute, to give back, or to use a specific talent to help others and make the world a better place. On the professional front, you are energised and eager to demonstrate your abilities to the world. Written communication requires attention. Be nice and gentle in your approach and expression. This week, your intellectual abilities will display sharpness. You engage in a variety of activities. On the personal front, action and discussion are necessary to elevate your love life. Being in the presence of creative individuals will make you feel good. Go ahead and contact the people about whom you have been thinking.

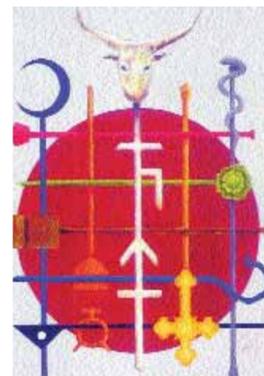
Lucky number 1 | **Lucky colour** Indigo
Lucky day Friday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week, you must take some actions to improve your health. Even if you are bedridden, consider what activities you can do. Read more spiritual books and contact others who have different belief systems than you. On the job front, you will be forced to decide. Analyse all available facts before making any decisions. It is possible that something you thought was bad will turn out to be beneficial. Mixing professional and personal lives should be avoided. A committed relationship will become stronger and more balanced. Give your spouse some space while still ensuring that you are doing your fair share to contribute to the relationship.

Lucky number 12 | **Lucky colour** Yellow
Lucky day Wednesday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

This week, you are fun and full of energy. Create a new future for yourself using your imagination and creativity, and then make it a reality. Your health will improve. Take all precautions and preventive measures to your advantage. Invest your time and money in maintaining your health and living a good life. On the professional front, you work with confidence in yourself, and this confidence will earn the approval of your superiors. Fortunately, you are aware of your ideals and customs. Good outcomes may take time, but you must be patient. Your calm and pleasant attitude will provide you with stability and help you build a name for yourself in the future. In relationships, you are vocal and direct in your communication. Give your spouse some space and prevent any competing viewpoints in a close relationship.

Lucky number 17 | **Lucky colour** Silver
Lucky day Saturday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

Stay fit, make sure you eat at regular intervals, and exercise. Money and your work are crucial to you right now. But in today's fast-paced world, health suffers. A lot of people seem to have forgotten that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. If you are not serious, you might invite a slew of health problems and blow a large hole in your wallet. Professionally, abrupt setbacks are possible right now. This period's intensity will lead you to fights. You may feel degraded and unappreciated by your co-workers and superiors. If you believe your job is unsatisfying, consider making a change. You deserve to be happy. People in a relationship will have more memorable experiences in each other's company.

Lucky number 16 | **Lucky colour** White
Lucky day Sunday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

A change in your diet and exercise routine is important. You must join some kind of group or club. Follow nutritionist advice and workout under the supervision of a gym trainer. In terms of your career, use your brain rather than your heart. You are prone to becoming very emotional about minor situations, which will not serve you well. In professional matters, you are flexible and informal; there is a need for a solid position. You are more likely to pursue creative undertakings that allow you to express yourself, such as painting, music, theatre, and poetry. Individuals in the literary realm will excel. On the relationship front, you must work together to overcome any obstacles and strengthen your bond.

Lucky number 7 | **Lucky colour** Brown
Lucky day Thursday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

You are a carefree and passionate individual who wishes to enjoy every moment of your life. You are both physically and intellectually active. No matter how busy you are professionally and personally, your excess energy will not allow you to be idle. This is the moment to channel your creative energy for your own gain. Not everything in your career and financial future is smooth. The job will most certainly disappoint you. You might want to change jobs. It is best not to make rash decisions. Intimate life is peaceful. You make good use of your authority and power. In a romantic relationship, your spouse may experience boredom in your presence, or vice versa. Explore methods to improve your relationship by making minor adjustments to your approach.

Lucky number 13 | **Lucky colour** Rose Gold
Lucky day Tuesday



CANCER June 21-July 22

Tension over minor problems is expected this week. You are in a strange mood, and worldly pleasures and hobbies are off the table. You desire solitude and leisure. To deal with your current position, you need privacy. Yet, resuming life and confronting obstacles with greater zeal and creativity is also suggested. Work is complicated, but you are motivated to meet the objectives. You may have to make a difficult decision regarding money or love. Do not give up your ethics for money. Money cannot buy self-esteem or spiritual well-being. This week, your dreams and desire to realise those aspirations in the material world will come true. You are full of hope and enthusiasm.

Lucky number 19 | **Lucky colour** Golden
Lucky day Sunday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

You are likely to be witty and energetic this week. You will feel as if you are in the limelight, and others will be eager to hear your thoughts. Your general health is still superb. You can arrange a long journey to experience some differences. It is also likely that you will contact people from various places. On the professional front, you will have the opportunity to launch your career. Students must plan their time to stay on track with their studies. You have the talents and intellect, but you need the appropriate guidance to help you progress and prepare for a better future. Research-related work is on the card. You will be able to influence your loved ones. If you do not have control over your verbal communication, your relationships may suffer.

Lucky number 8 | **Lucky colour** Camel Brown
Lucky day Friday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

Your health and creativity are in terrific shape, and this is a time of amazing insight. You may experience a breakthrough moment in which conscious knowledge suddenly reaches its peak. This is an excellent opportunity to remove the cloud that has prevented you from recognising the underlying truth. Avoid being angry, aggressive, or rushing since they might be harmful to your health. You will have a sense of financial abundance. Money will come in. Past investments will now pay off handsomely. You enjoy what you currently have, knowing that your difficulties are over. You also understand that with confidence, self-discipline, and patience, you can achieve anything. On the personal front, your intuitive sense provides you with relevant and beneficial knowledge and assists you in connecting with your subconscious mind.

Lucky number 3 | **Lucky colour** Peach
Lucky day Saturday

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ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Address emotional vulnerability



Tamasa driven people are marked with inertia, indolence, mindless acts, and negative mind set. With their hardened negative tendencies often their inter-personal relationship skills get comprised. Ordinarily, they are self-centric, least concerned about their collective obligations and oblivious to other's sensibilities and concerns as well. Invariably, their response and reaction to external and internal promptings are based on instinctive judgment - almost animal like - and therefore, often ill-conceived. So, they are not at peace by themselves. Nor they let others remain peaceful. Through their unseemly conduct, they often unsettle familial and societal harmony.

The living world comprises of an assortment of people having varying mental dispensation, each hosting their own mental inconsistencies. The goings in such a complex world can't be easy. What further complicates the problem are challenges posed by competing interests of others. Yet, the obvious wish would be to enjoy a successful life with ease and comfort. Here comes the role of interpersonal relationship skills that provide ground for relating well to those around, transgressing all individualistic and collective limitations. It is not simply vital to peaceful coexistence within the family and society. It affects our productive aspirations no less. You need to relate well with those associated with your enterprise to elicit their due support, but for which you can't expect desired success. To sum up, all about life is how well we relate to the self, those around, and the society at large.

Interpersonal relationship skills are primarily guided by three factors - the inherent mental predisposition, environmental influences, and self-acquired virtues. Inherent mental tendencies set the terms of how we relate to the outer world. Added to that is how we are brought up during our early childhood. We also get influenced by prevailing societal trends.

Many a times, our parents unthinkingly make us too much obsessed about our religious, cultural, economic, and social identity. That makes an inedible mark in our mind and psyche. Consequently, we look at people around within the limits of narrow

window frame. Often that breeds in a sense of divide and differentiation. Ostensibly, a lesson in how to negotiate with such a complex world becomes imperative. That calls for acquiring such virtues through fresh educative inputs, as would facilitate relating well to the world around, free from any preconditioning whatsoever.

Another important aspect of our day-to-day life that deserves attention is our emotional frame of mind (the feeling side). Emotion, it needs to be appreciated, is a complex psychological phenomenon that often leads to intense and uncontrolled mental activity characterised by high degree of pleasure or displeasure. It holds the key to our mood, temperament, and personality disposition. Emotion is an affective state of consciousness, which is based on strong instinctive feeling over a situation, real or assumed. Often, during heightened state of emotionality, sense of reasons takes a back seat. Sometimes emotional upsurge leads to intense and uncontrolled mental activity. That unsettles psychological and physiological balance. Our mental and physical health may then come under cloud, often calling for medical intervention.

A young man having suddenly lost his only hope - his father - got so much emotionally disturbed that he lost his mental balance. He began hallucinating all the time, and his thought process became incoherent. He had to undergo long drawn psychiatric treatment to regain his normal frame of mind.

But how would emotion play out is again dependent on the way our mind is inherently predisposed. Our habits and attitudes, virtues and attributes,

desire trends, set the term of how we react and respond to internal and external stimuli. Our habit tendencies may stir up intense emotions. An extrovert will express his emotions. The introvert may though conceal it, but can't escape its impact from within, and which is more harmful.

An oversensitive person may get too much exercised even on trivial issues, stretch them beyond their due, when they temporarily lose sense of reasons, particularly when things do not move on expected lines. They then become emotionally unstable. But here again, intense positive emotions can be motivating. More often intelligence fails to act on the power of emotion. If, however, intelligence is properly handled, it could orient the emotional power towards a meaningful purpose.

Two wings in perfect balance facilitates a bird fly. Similarly, human beings are armed with two tools to conduct themselves in life - intelligence and emotions. We work towards improving our intelligence level, but seldom look at our inherent emotional tendencies. The two in balance will let us have a smooth run of life.